BERNARD SHAW
THE MASK

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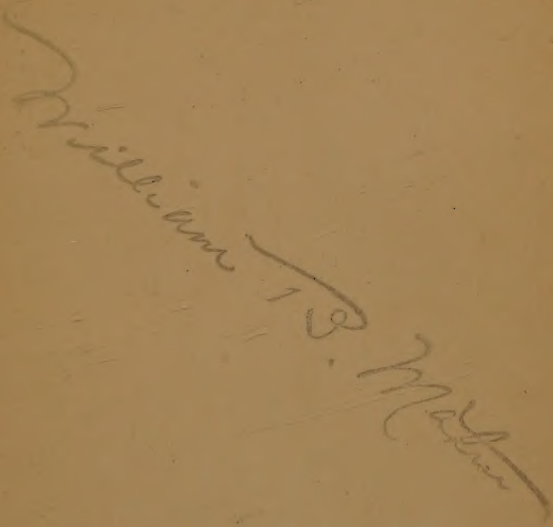
RICHARD BURTON



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BERNARD SHAW

The Man and The Mask

BY

RICHARD BURTON

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PREFACE

THE following pages attempt to give within limits somewhat sharply drawn a definite idea of the personality, the work, and the meaning of a dramatist of our day who has gained distinction, invited abuse, and secured in excess the dubious compliment of misrepresentation. So far as the book can claim to be a contribution to the subject, it may base it on the succinctness of the presentation; the analyses of the plays in chronologic sequence, technic as well as teaching and literary quality in mind; and upon the chapters in which respectively Shaw's craft as an artist of the theatre and his intellectual significance as publicist and philosopher are studied.

No one can write a book on Bernard Shaw without acknowledging the inevitable obligation to Dr. Archibald Henderson, the authoritative biographer of the playwright, and the man best fitted to decide any question pertaining to him. The present writer renders grateful thanks to Dr. Henderson for his quick and generous giving of information not otherwise to be secured: a debt as pleasant as it is imperative to pay in this preface.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	A Preliminary View	1
II.	The Man	15
III.	The Evidence of the Plays . .	34
	"Widowers' Houses" . . .	39
	"The Philanderer"	45
	"Mrs. Warren's Profession" . .	49
	"Arms and the Man" . . .	58
IV.	The Evidence of the Plays, Continued:	66
	"Candida"	66
	"How He Lied to Her Husband" .	74
	"You Never Can Tell" . . .	76
	"The Man of Destiny" . . .	82
	"The Devil's Disciple" . . .	89
	"Cæsar and Cleopatra" . . .	95
	"Captain Brassbound's Conversion"	100
	"The Admirable Bashville" . .	106
V.	The Evidence of the Plays, Continued:	108
	"Man and Superman" . . .	108
	"John Bull's Other Island" . .	114

CHAPTER PAGE

"Passion, Poison, and Petrifaction" 119
"Major Barbara" 120
"The Doctor's Dilemma" . . 129
"The Interlude at The Playhouse" 139
"Getting Married" 140

VI. The Evidence of the Plays, Concluded: 147
"The Showing-up of Blanco Posnet" 147
"Press Cuttings" 153
"Misalliance" 157
"The Dark Lady of the Sonnets" . 160
"Fanny's First Play" . . . 162
"Androcles and the Lion" . . 167
"Overruled" 173
"Pygmalion" 176
"Great Catherine" 183
"The Music Cure" 185

VII. The Social Thinker 189

VIII. The Poet and Mystic 211

IX. The Theatre Craftsman . . . 238

X. Shaw's Place in Modern Drama . 271

Bibliography 295

Index 297

BERNARD SHAW
THE MAN AND THE MASK

BERNARD SHAW

CHAPTER I

A PRELIMINARY VIEW

It might be said that to declare Shaw a man behind a mask is only a way of calling him a human being. We are all masks, as the very etymology of *person* implies. Behind our words and deeds and personalities hides the real ego known only to itself and its maker; indeed, lucky if in an occasional crisis it be known to itself. George Eliot says somewhere that we are always either overestimating or underestimating our fellows; it is only God who sees us as we are. The gnomic saying of the Greeks, "Know thyself," takes a deeper meaning as its full modern implications are realized.

Nevertheless, the title of this book is justified in that Shaw has seen fit to adopt a method and has fostered a popular idea of him which ob-

scure his true personality and the meaning of his work. He has, by his own confession, put on the garb of the mountebank and attracted wide public attention thereby; his purpose in so doing is not self-advertisement, though the reverse is often assumed; but rather, the more general hearing thus secured for his views.

As a result, and quite naturally, he is among the best known and least known of men. His vogue as a dramatist is very great, he is both notorious and famous in this phase of his activity; yet little understood, even yet, in the true sense. Shaw first suffered from the darkness of obscurity; now he suffers from that excess of light offered by newspapers: which is darkness visible. Of old, misunderstood and neglected, it is his paradoxical fate,—with a certain fitness for the dealer in paradox,—when lauded and run after, to be still misunderstood. If the mountebank hides the man, he himself must divide the blame with the public; since it is by his own preference that he has put an antic disposition on.

The present volume essays to find, and to delineate within moderate limits, the man behind

the mask; and showing him in his work, to exhibit the true lineaments of a forceful and serious satiric thinker whose skill in dramaturgy places him with the ablest playwrights of his time. It seeks to avoid alike the shallow misappreciations of the more common estimate and the super-laudation of Shaw idolaters. It is based upon hearty, but, I trust, clear-eyed admiration, and expresses the belief that, rightly seen, Bernard Shaw is a fine artist of the theatre and a worthy leader in the twentieth century *éclaircissement* of the English-speaking people.

The contrast between Shaw today and Shaw when he began to write plays is in itself a drama. During the theatre season of 1914-5, no less than seven of his plays were shown in New York City alone. In Germany and France, in Russia and Scandinavia, no dramatic author of English speech, save possibly Shakspere, equals him in popularity. A Frenchman, M. Hamon, has written a critical book, the sub-title of which, "The Molière of the Twentieth Century," is its own comment. Here is a man in danger of being what is called a classic before he dies: still another paradox. And for nine years during

his novitiate in London, his earnings by his pen amounted to six pounds.

Nevertheless, as I have implied, not only with the general public, who get their caricature of any person of public import through gossip, printed or spoken, by hearsay and haphazard; but also with numerous intelligent playgoers and play-readers, he is still little more than an amusing, irresponsible fellow, a phrase maker and iconoclast of conventions, whose forte is the detached jibe, the conscienceless though scintillant epigram, whose sole purpose is to shock and overturn. These impute a kind of merit to him in that he has popularized the thesis drama; but stop there. To not a few who go a little further in acceptance, he remains an intellectual cocktail, not so much mental food as a stimulant of questionable peptonic worth.

All such fail to see that while the shock in Shaw is doubtless there, there is a hope behind it: the hope to shock an inert mass into thinking about sundry vital latter-day social matters; a galvanic process brought about by the driving power of a wit backed by an alert, serious mind.

It were foolish to deny that the importance of Shaw's subject-matter as well as his seriousness of intention are easily lost sight of in his somewhat startling manner of presentation. He is his own worst enemy in this respect. Not only has he adopted the methods of the showman—"the cart and the trumpet for me," he cries—but it would appear at times that he takes a wilful pleasure in puzzling journeyman brains. He would agree with Carlyle as to the proportion of fools in the British Isles (subtracting the Celts), but would raise the percentage. And he has the mischievous habit—there is a touch of the *enfant terrible* in this complex personality—of stating his thought in terms of whimsical exaggeration. We must simply accept this as a part of the technic of his dialectics, and make the expected allowance. The literalist has a hard time with Bernard Shaw, while the latter looks on with a malicious grin, though the most amiable of men.

Moreover, of all writers and thinkers, he is the most dangerous to listen to in garbled form or to trust in sentences disrupted from their setting. And as the newspapers exist, among other

worthier objects, for the purpose of headlining human utterances, and this is another name for distortion, he suffers peculiarly.

To illustrate: in his parliamentary report on the censorship of plays, he says: "I am not an ordinary playwright in general practice. I am a specialist in immoral and heretical plays." Those who read to run away, want no more than this. Shaw stands self-condemned before them. But if this sufficiently challenging remark be taken in its connection, and the whole screed read (which perhaps two or three will do of the hundred who will hear or read the plays), it will be evident that Shaw means that he writes plays that run counter to what he deems the pseudo-morality of our day; "immoral" turns out to be "moral," in his Shavian sense. Had he said this in the usual unpiquant way, he had not been Bernard Shaw, nor have arrested the jaded attention. Thus, his brilliancy as a writer gets in the way of his thought, and we blame his manner rather than our haste or unwillingness to read him to the end.

A free use of sweeping generalizations, violently juxtaposed contradictions, and a very de-

bauch of superlatives further complicate matters. He makes his points effective, sets them forth in a high light, in this fashion. One might be tempted to call it a linguistic, not a mental habit, were it not for the obvious fact that it is all temperamental, too; Shaw's cool, reflective, analytic type of mind when once it gets tangled with words in the expression of thought, acquires a heat which is the result of a characteristic state of his emotions. He feels keenly, and his feelings, when he is warmed to his topic, color all his conclusions. Striving to be objective, he really becomes a superb example of impressionism, and is all the more effective as a pleader because of it. The word *pleader*, or *advocate*, is apt; Shaw is a great pleader, often a special pleader, as were Carlyle and Ruskin, and his eloquence, like theirs, will last even if in due time his views, like theirs, are discredited. The impact of his feeling has behind it a tremendously impelling moral force. The blend of these two qualities, expressional gift and moral suasion, makes him the reformer he is.

With the eccentricities of thought and expression conceded, it is much the easiest way to call

Shaw a crack-brained enthusiast or a smart notoriety hunter, (as one might describe a Gertrude Stein), and so dismiss him. This is very much what the many do. Cryptic sayings and intellectual somersaults are not for the lovers of the trite and the obvious. These may be reminded that writers exist—to mention names were invidious—who supply their needs. Why lug in Shaw?—to paraphrase Whistler.

It is a pity to confuse the sound estimate of such a man in his representative work with merely temporary prejudices. Just now, Shaw is *persona non grata* because of his diatribe on the war. Whether this deliverance be wise or foolish, it is a query which does not affect his place as a writer of drama by one jot or tittle. Such questions loom large for the moment, but in the end are seen to be foolishly ephemeral. Only the things of the mind remain in the long run; they will be present and important after war and the rumors of war have died away. One heard, a few months ago, that, owing to public feeling, and in high dudgeon on account of it, Shaw had declared he would write no more plays. Yet, recently, his latest drama, to wit, "O'Flaherty,

V. C.," is announced in Dublin. One may, if one so wishes, assume with Mr. Wells that the playwright is demolished; or one may receive from the pious hands of Mr. John Palmer the epitaph of the once popular maker of intellectual drama. It were the part of saner criticism to reflect that these little flurries never affect the lasting reputation of authors who really matter, which this one indubitably does. Even when questions of character and conduct are involved—which, so far as morality is concerned, is not the case here, —nothing is surer than that in the end every writer is judged by his best work and by nothing else. The regrettable acts of our Byrons, Villons, Poes, Verlaines, Rousseaus, and Wildes do not alter by a hair's breadth the final favorable verdict upon their writings. The tranquil desiccation of dust takes care of all that. Shaw's attitude toward the war is not a popular one; it took courage to state his opinion, a quality he has never lacked. His view may be foolish, hasty, ill-judged, in bad taste; that it is unpatriotic is debatable, and depends upon your definition of patriotism. But, aside from all this, the main point is that Shaw is still the author of

"Candida," "Man and Superman," "Mrs. Warren's Profession," and sundry other plays—with their Prefaces; and the value whereof is just what it was before the war and will remain of exactly the same importance when, war being over, the people settle down to the long agony of paying the bills and mourning their dead. The war, as part of its general myopic mist, has had a tendency to obscure straight seeing and straight judging. Shaw will survive it, like the rest of us, (unless we are killed), and although apparently damaged, will eventually suffer less than most of the participants.

The mind simply balks at the picture of Bernard Shaw quitting before he is sixty, because of public execration begotten of his exercise of common sense (as he calls it) concerning the present struggle.

To peruse patiently, assimilatively, so voluminous a writer of fiction, essay and drama, by which process alone the earnest social thinker and fine craftsman of the theatre can be found, is more than a May-day pastime. Yet by no other road can the true Bernard Shaw be met. He has deliberately chosen the theatre as the

best mode through which to get a hearing, believing it to be "the most seductive form of the fine arts"; and hence the best medium for propaganda. Accept this serious aim, concede a method that is the only one possible for his personality, assume that he not only talks brilliantly but has something worth while to say, and the good that is in him will become ours. The assumption of seriousness is the fundamental prerequisite to an understanding. Above all, must the silly and peculiarly Anglo-Saxon mistake be avoided of supposing that a wit-thinker is a contradiction in terms, that fun and philosophy cannot keep house together. The French have Rabelais and know better, the Germans have Heine and Richter; perhaps some day the Americans will recall Mark Twain, the British, Shaw, and both nations have learned the lesson. At present, to be deep and not dull, weighty and not heavy, is to be a mental suspect.

In the critical treatment of Shaw up to the present time, emphasis has been laid, upon the whole, too much upon Shaw the thinker, at the expense of Shaw the artist. Important as an intellectual arouser he certainly is, but equally

true is it that he is a fine artist of the theatre and the tendency to minimize or deny his skill and overlook his significance in the modern development of the playhouse on its technical side is to be deplored. Too often in dealing with Shaw, has it been assumed that he has won his way to a foremost position in the contemporary theatre through sheer power of thought and originality of manner, breaking the rules and succeeding in spite of a lack of craftsmanship, as Brieux in France has done with late dramas like "Maternity" and "Damaged Goods." Nothing is further from the truth. Shaw has not been careless or unaware of his métier. He has broadened the rules, as the creative artist seeking a freer self-expression always must, and the study of his methods, if accompanied with some acquaintance with dramatic technic in general, will convince the student of this fact.

In chapters three to six, in which I have examined all the Shaw pieces in chronologic order, attention has been directed in each case to the way in which results have been obtained by the extension of sound dramaturgic principles as applied to a new purpose, and a consequent un-

usualness which to the superficial scrutiny may appear to mean an inexpert hand. I believe it is within the bounds of modesty to claim that the technical elements of this writer's work have not hitherto been so definitely pointed out. The view thus presented should be for this reason a more balanced, rounded one. This attention to the technic of the individual plays is further amplified in chapter nine, wherein, synthetically, the work is studied in its technical aspects. In the chapters which sum up the main aspects of the dramatist's work, specific points made in the analysis of the plays are again used, intentionally. I make no apology for this, believing it to be helpful.

A writer is to be found in his work and estimated by his work. But a knowledge of a man's personality in his deeds and days, in his relation to family, city, and state, helps to interpret him when we seek to understand his meaning as an author. Particularly is this true of Bernard Shaw, who has proved so baffling to many as play writer and social thinker. Therefore, it is worth while to look at the man and citizen before we take up the dramatic works which reflect—or, as

some would say, distort,—his position toward life and human society.

But this thought may well be retained as a background to any personal consideration of Shaw's thought; a consideration that desires to pass over and beyond the personal as far as is possible, and see the truth about him objectively, and as it is. It may be that the loss of perspective denied to a critic who tries to see a contemporary for his real significance, is in a measure made up for by that warmth of contact which is not always to be regarded as a misleading deflection. Any judgment which lacks the ruddy verdict of the heart is as much astray as that which allows itself to be swept away by that emotion. A certain value in Shaw can already be seen, although his ultimate place must be later decided. He has stimulated men broadly into the earnest consideration of important social questions. He is a wise physician who performs upon the body of our time the surgical operation of making us think; and who, by the use of the anesthesia of art, has made the process pleasurable.

CHAPTER II

THE MAN

The salient facts of Shaw's personal career with its background of ancestry, family, early environment, education, and subsequent development are so well known that one can be succinct. Refraining from too great particularity, I shall give main stress to certain significant happenings for their value in throwing light upon his character and views. Doctor Henderson, Mr. McCabe, and other biographers have spread out the general story for our scrutiny.

George Bernard Shaw, or Bernard Shaw as the world has come to call him, is a man of sixty years, in the full prime of his intellectual powers, although likely to grow in mental stature during the coming decade. His family can be described as belonging to the upper middle class of Protestant Irish, small gentry whose orientation about a baronet of distant kin has furnished satiric references for the member of the family whose democracy has always been of a sort to

get the irony in such spectacles. The family tree shows that to call the Shaws Celts is to use the word in the usual loose way, since they are of an English and Scotch strain which settled in Ireland in the seventeenth century; as Mr. McCabe puts it, "they were Orange aliens in Catholic Ireland." Celt is a generic name to include the Irish, Scotch, and Welsh, and in this sense the Shaws were dominantly Celtic. Irish they were not in the deepest, fullest significance of the word. Of his father, first a small government official, then an unsuccessful corn merchant, we get an uncomplimentary picture from the son; the former seems to have been an example of a somewhat ineffective, rather helpless specimen of the lesser gentry. It is from the mother that Shaw derives, so far as he is to be explained by his immediate parentage. She was evidently a woman of parts and strong character; a fine musician from whom he got his knowledge of and taste in that art; and modern in the way in which, when the family fortunes were at ebb tide, she was able to go out into the world and by her talents and will-power support those dependent upon her; as well as later, tide over her gifted

son in his harsh struggle in London to get on his feet as a writer and thinker. Shaw would apparently have foundered during those Grub Street days had it not been for this maternal backing; and he has handsomely made acknowledgment of the fact in print. He reports that as a lad he was not supposed to play with the children of tradespeople; which sheds light upon his family, and was regarded by the embryo rebel and democrat as an education in snobbery. We get a picture of him as an imaginative, probing, restless fellow, who disdained dreary chapel going, and found his consolation in the companionship of his mother with her music. School found him sceptic and left him contemptuous. With characteristic energy he said of it: "It was the most completely wasted and mischievous part of my life." But he read books worth while in an eclectic fashion; at fifteen his education in the formal sense ceased. But music at home, the National Gallery in Dublin, and his private commerce with literature did much to develop his taste and powers. It is interesting to know that letters at this time attracted him less than painting and music.

Next, we see him in the office of a land agent; or rather, he is there, but hard to see, for Shaw as a business man—or boy—arouses incredulity. Yet, to make the smile ironic, he showed excellent capacity in such work, then and always, and those who deal with him today are aware of it. He is that unusual combination, a literary man of genius and shrewd man-of-affairs, with a practical gift for the details of committee meetings and public social work. Here is one of his many contradictions. When Mrs. Shaw removed to London to prosecute her career in music, Bernard and his father lived in Dublin lodgings for several years. It seems to have been an irksome period for the son, who, as solace, was reading the scientists and formulating his political, social, and philosophic views; a witness to this was his letter in *Public Opinion* in which his disgust at the methods of the American evangelists, Moody and Sankey, was expressed with such characteristic vigor as to lay him open to the charge of atheist. At the age of twenty, feeling that self-preservation demanded a wider horizon, he went to London himself (1876), and for nine years followed letters on a little oatmeal; with

results sardonically described by the would-be author, who states that the entire takings of his pen were six pounds, and five of them for a medical advertisement! He was a very shabby genteel figure during these years; which nevertheless meant fruitful growth, enlarging experience. He appeared now and then in minor publications and produced his first piece of fiction, concerning which Shaw remarks that the edition, having no sale, had been stored away and partially eaten by mice; "but even they have been unable to finish it."

He was in the way of meeting persons of intellectual and esthetic tastes and accomplishments; he lectured briefly for the Edison Telephone Company, assimiliated Spencer, Darwin, and Huxley, joined the Zeletical Society, an organization whose chief business in the eighteen-eighties was to attack the Christian doctrines; frequented all sorts of radical hole-and-corner meetings, where his own sort naturally foregathered; and was always by report a shabby, piquant, arresting figure, eagerly earnest to discuss the universe, and gradually training himself by these practices to be one of the most effective

platform men of his day in England. One gets a clear vision of G. B. S. in these days, haranguing a Sunday morning mob from the tail end of a cart in Hyde Park. He heard Henry George lecture one night, and the American gave him a definite impulse towards social problems in contrast with the theoretic and intellectual problems which philosophical socialism is wont to thresh out. Shaw declares that George was a turning point in his career; though the single tax panacea did not entirely satisfy him later. He allied himself with the Land Reform Union and became acquainted with thinkers like Edward Carpenter, Henry Salt, Sidney Olivier, Sidney Webb, and J. L. Joyne; also he settled into those ascetic habits of life which today offer us the spectacle of one whose own writings are taken to plead for seemingly lawless irregularities, leading a life of well-nigh monastic regimen and abstention. Vegetarianism was adopted and has been consistently followed; a habit "the ravages of which his robust constitution," says McCabe, "has admirably resisted for years," a somewhat naïve remark, hardly doing justice to the probability that this dietary predilection, along with an

avoidance of tobacco and all liquors, plays an appreciable part in the peculiar powers of Shaw. To say that the writer whose course of life is of this character is exactly the one to handle sex matters with the Biblical directness and boldness familiar to us in Shaw, is doubtless to expose oneself to ridicule; nevertheless, I believe the suggestion has much to support it. If Shaw is the plainest spoken of dramatists and the frankest in choice of themes, he is at the same time the purest minded. And to deny that this bears no relation to his unusual purity of life (using the word purity in no silly, restricted sense) seems to me absurd.

It is both difficult and unnecessary to bring the Shaw of these earlier days under the restraint of a category or school. He was an independent and eclectic thinker, particularly interested by nature in social theories of reform. An essentially sympathetic nature at bottom, despite all contrary appearances, he had an honesty and openness of mind which led him to object as much to the stern application of the doctrine of the survival of the fittest as to the conventionalities and prettinesses of the Christian society

which surrounded him. To be en rapport with the scientific notions of his day, as a modern realistic thinker, he must have accepted in its full implications the evolutionary doctrine. But the ethical bias and the odd idealism in him worked together to modify or oppose this view, as will be further seen later in this study, when we come to consider his religious and philosophic position.

His special involvement in socialism was but the natural flowering out of his general rebellious attitude towards privilege, capital, and things-as-they-are. He passed from George to the German Marx, with his theory of rent, took part in the debates of the Social Democratic Federation, and for a time Marx's theory of surplus value took the place with him before occupied by George's single tax as an open sesame of reform. He sloughed off earlier views as he lived and thought, with the courage of the strong man aware that consistency, in the sense of dogged retention of opinion, is emphatically not a jewel. In 1884, the Fabian Society, the name itself suggestive of the policy of making haste slowly, was formed. Shaw became one of its leading members, and has been influential in the organization ever since;

his best essays on economic subjects have appeared in the society's publications. His tracts for the times have done much to make the Fabians known to a wider public than would otherwise be secured. In its original purpose, The Fabian Society was an emancipated, middle-class attempt to improve social conditions by wiser legislation. Mr. McCabe gives the following propositions as illustrative of the Fabian creed, in Shavian form:

"That a life interest in the Land and Capital of the nation is the birthright of every individual;

"That the state should compete with private individuals, especially with parents—in providing happy homes for children, so that every child may have a refuge from the tyranny or neglect of its natural custodians;

"That the established government has no more right to call itself the State than the smoke of London has to call itself the weather."

As one studies this phase of Shaw's development and belief, and quite irrespective of one's acceptance of his views, the impression of the vast amount of laborious, technical writing he has

done in this special field comes as a needed corrective to the still prevalent notion, which sees him as a sort of mental butterfly spreading epigrams along the social parterres. It may be added that a course in the Fabian Essays, supplemented by a reading of his fiction, especially "The Unsocial Socialist" and "The Irrational Knot," will give a good idea of a side of Shaw very likely to be overlooked by those who confine themselves to the plays,—and probably to a few of them only. It is not the younger Shaw alone we discover, feeling his way to a formulation of his opinions, but a man fiercely in earnest and proving it by the kind of thankless work he does. As vestryman and borough councilor later in his career he has shown his eager willingness to do his share in obscure social service. He refused to stand for Parliament and in his letter of declination declared that he was too poor a man to meet the expenses involved—a novel reason which had behind it a keen sense of social obligation.

The year 1885 was of moment in his career, because he then made the acquaintance of William Archer, and that accomplished critic of the drama, then a fellow socialist, induced him to

leave novel writing, disastrous in the practical results, and turn to criticism. For several years thereafter he was doing those pungent little papers for *The Saturday Review* on music, art, and, later, drama, which made him recognized as a brilliant iconoclast of the pen. Particularly was the meeting and its result of significance because it associated him with dramatic criticism, and prepared him for play-writing. It is illuminating to see how often the future playwright is conducted to his métier by this path. Those criticisms of Shaw, now to be enjoyed in two portly volumes, are proof enough of his solid grounding in the basic principles of the craft. And they are plainly to be seen now as the most original, pioneer work of the time in this department of letters.

It was Archer, moreover, who directly instigated the play-writing. He suggested a play in collaboration, a free treatment of the Rhinegold motive. Wagner was to be used for purposes of socialistic application. Two acts were written and laid aside. Finally, Shaw, who at the time was writing of art and was giving more attention to the stage because of his dramatic reviewing,

was pricked anew into an attempt to dress up the abandoned socialistic play by his interest in Grein's Independent Theatre movement, at that time sorely in need of material from English hands. The result was "Widowers' Houses," the first of the plays dubbed by him "pleasant and unpleasant;" and whatever its defects, a plain notification that a man to reckon with had stepped into the English theatre. It was the first gun in the long warfare in which, as he put it, he fought the drama with plays; in other words, opposed current trash with that which appealed to brains, taste, and conscience, the intellectual theatre for which he, above all others in England, was to stand. This play-writing was to have a period of obscurity both as book literature and still more as stage product, as we have seen in the opening chapter. The Independent Theatre appealed but to the *cognoscenti*, who were then fewer even than they are now; the performances at this pioneer venture in the theatre of intelligence were at the best only a *succès d'estime*. "Widowers' Houses" will be examined along with the other pieces at the proper place; here it is sufficient to register the interesting way in

which Shaw was deflected from criticism and fiction to the stage. The Preface to the play tells the circumstances as he alone can.

The personal history of Bernard Shaw from the inception of play-writing in 1892 to the present day—a period of well-nigh a quarter century—becomes in the main an account of his early rejection by contemporary judgment; the slow, grudging acceptance as his work forced itself into critical and, later, general, attention; with the change to a vogue eager, even avid, beginning with the success of "Candida" in 1903; a vogue carrying with it obvious dangers of wrong emphasis, hasty generalization, and misappreciation. In a sense, Shaw is just the author to suffer in the house of his seeming friends. But it is accurate to say that for about fifteen years he has steadily gained not only in notoriety but in fame in the more solid meaning of the word; his dramas are more frequently played in various lands, their financial value has been enhanced, and a new piece by this author is an event of moment in stage art, whether the city be Berlin, London, or New York. Abroad, no man save Shakspere is more frequently in the repertory of

serious playhouses. Decidedly, strikingly, he has arrived in the worldly recognition of his talents. Fame and fortune are his, and the bizarre early figure, lean and unconventionally picturesque, begins to look *à la mode*. It is the period of test, lest peradventure the rebel paradoxer wax sleek and debonair. But no such result is apparent at the present time. If Shaw now seem conservative, it must be the change in latter-day opinion, rather than in him. He is still the writer who earlier startled us with his social rebellion. Indeed, a study of his work in its evolution will bear out the statement that he is at fifty-five to sixty more progressive, more radical, than in earlier teaching. No more advanced thinking can be found in the entire range of his writings than the Preface to "Getting Married," and that to "Androcles and the Lion."

But for the proper perspective, as we confront the somewhat formidable spectacle of Bernard Shaw, still wearing the mask perhaps, but at least having conquered the Philistine who kept him out of the Promised Land of success, it is highly necessary to continue to see the man of the eighties: obscure fictionist, debater, social

worker, vestryman, and borough councilor, shabby publicist, and grubber in municipal details both dull and unimportant to the many who laugh over his dramatic scintillations.

When he was ill and out at elbows, he married Miss Charlotte Frances Payne-Townshend, and his own account of it is so richly humorous that it were a sin not to reproduce it here:

"I was very ill when I was married, altogether a wreck on crutches and in an old jacket which the crutch had worn to rags. I had asked my friends, Mr. Graham Wallas, of the London School Board, and Mr. Henry Salt, the biographer of Shelley and De Quincey, to act as witnesses, and of course, in honor of the occasion they were dressed in their best clothes. The register never imagined I could possibly be the bridegroom; they took me for the inevitable beggar who completes all wedding processions. Wallas, who is considerably over six feet high, seemed to him to be the hero of the occasion and he was proceeding calmly to marry him to my betrothed, when Wallas, thinking the formula rather strong for a mere witness, hesitated at the last moment and left the prize to me."

That nothing is known or mooted of Shaw's family life, in the case of a man who is the natural prey of the newsmongers, is the best comment upon its character, and a final compliment; no more concerning it is called for.

It would seem as if Bernard Shaw at sixty had some of his best years ahead of him as dramatist, thinker, social influence. He is much in demand at gatherings where vital topics of the day are discussed, and the very fact that he is a man of place and property gives him a better chance perhaps to cope with the Philistine; the latter is more likely to listen to one who is no longer the shabby buffoon, but the favored social figure. He does not strike one as of the type which shoots its shaft early, or is likely to be spoiled by worldly favor. Were he through as a writer today, the plays, some thirty of them, are his testament. But one imagines that the coming years, let us say the decade from sixty to seventy, will bring some highly characteristic contributions from his study in Adelphi Terrace or his country place at Ayot St. Lawrence. There is something peculiarly stimulating in the thought of Bernard Shaw passing from elderly

to old; I believe age will help him to be taken seriously, not because he will be more serious, but because even the light-minded may then perceive, aided by such marginal notes as Time adds, the essential quality of the man. And it will be said of him then, as it can be said now, though it is less likely to be, that he offers the spectacle of a good citizen, trying to leave a better social condition than he found; and in this like unto Carlyle, Ruskin, William Morris. He has said that he deemed his life belonged to the community, and he has lived up to that pronunciamento. In refusing a newspaper interview, George Meredith declared that the public had no right to his private affairs, except that he "be reputedly a good citizen." This has also been Shaw's attitude, however much his career, superficially regarded, may appear to differ from the Box Hill magician. Privately, he has preserved the obscurity of good taste: publicly, he has done all in his power to exploit himself for the sake of his message. The Fabian essayist as such, could never win a general audience: the author of "Candida," "Fanny's First Play," and the Prefaces could!

The Shaw of the early essays, the fiction and

the novels, he of Hyde Park meetings and radical society debatings, is not quite the Shaw of 1916; there would inevitably be some change in the growth of a mind worth talking about. But while there has been a redistribution of emphasis upon some of his convictions, a sloughing off of some of his first espousals of theory, and from time to time, these later years, a definite willingness to indulge a mood of irresponsible sportiveness, on the whole we are presented today with the same G. B. S., save that the central social interest is deepened, and the articles of his credo are more clearly correlated, so as to produce an effect of unified social vision. Emphatically, this is not a thinker who, with the advance to full intellectual maturity, has either wearied of well doing, or, disappointed with his work and its reception, like Ibsen in "When We Dead Awaken," fallen back upon sad autobiography and no longer strives militantly to preach his gospel. Militant is just the word to use in describing Shaw as person and as social power; he is flamingly militant and never more so than now, albeit he has attained to an age and reached a position of influence which, broadly speaking, have a

marked tendency to quench individualism,—so often an uncomfortable kicker against the pricks.

And so Shaw's life offers us another of the paradoxes which make up his portrait for the world: a man who has come to the conservatism of years and success, but remains hotly a radical; a man who seems obstreperously forward in self-exploitation, and yet is in private life modestly a gentleman shrinking from any undue obtruding of his personal history. Shaw's name will to the end of the chapter be provocative of irritation to many; it will beget opposition and dislike, as a matter of course. But it is perfectly safe to say that no one who takes the trouble to see his life as it is, and to read his writings sufficiently to get the coördination of his teaching, will ever make the mistake of denying to this austere Puritan in disguise of playmaker a character far above unworthy ambition, insincerity, or any taint of violating the dictates of conscience for the sake of worldly gain. The man behind the mask is a very real and honest and high-aiming man, if once the mask be removed.

CHAPTER III

THE EVIDENCE OF THE PLAYS

"WIDOWERS' HOUSES" TO "ARMS AND THE MAN"

It will be an aid to the proper understanding of Shaw, if from the first we distinguish between his matter and his manner. The proof of his genuineness as thinker and writer lies in an open-minded examination of his works, approaching them with a fortifying comprehension of his personality and private history; also, as especially important, with a clear-eyed realization of certain peculiarities in his way of conveying his message. These idiosyncrasies involve method and style, and must be accepted as the condition of a right relation between him and us.

The danger, at least in Anglo-Saxon lands, of mixing fun and philosophy has been already referred to: as well try to blend oil and water. Yet has Bernard Shaw boldly chosen, and at his peril, to jest while serious, to be serious, al-

though jesting. That he has confused, pained, dazzled not a few by such a procedure, cannot be doubted; the proofs are all about us.

And as part of this danger, Shaw elected to use a form, the play, traditionally associated with entertainment, dedicate to frivolous themes and moods. When a man seizes upon the drama as a vehicle for instruction, while he is only reverting to first principles of English drama, and indeed, of all drama, the trouble may be trusted to begin. The majority is sure to chant in plaintive chorus: "We don't *want* to be taught, to be made to think in the playhouse: we want to be amused. There is thinking enough, and unpleasantness enough in life," a wail that rivals in hoary antiquity that other pathetic protest of the Philistine, "I know what I like!" Shaw began play-writing confronted by the historical attitude which declares that the playhouse is a secular indulgence; it belongs to a Saturday afternoon, and Sunday is just ahead when we can put on sober clothes of repentance, purge, leave sack, and live cleanly. And he met it by sufficiently hiding his seriousness within a framework of interesting fable and then so spicing his

sermon with condiments of wit and satire and comic scene and character, that the pleasure of the playhouse was preserved even for the light-minded, and the mourners became like unto those who rejoice. It has been a happy spectacle, this bouleversement of theatre-goers, and has added to the gaiety of nations.

But the distinction between matter and manner goes deeper. Let a suggestion already made be here expanded. One must agree to accept the underlying sanity of a writer who steadily, persistently, it would almost seem, perversely, uses the method of exaggeration to make his points stick out; and who, once under way and exacerbated before the images of crass stupidity whom as men of straw he sets up for attack, cannot for the life of him refrain from anger; a surface irritation growing on occasion into a thoroughgoing indignation that seizes the whole man. It is a generous, a noble rage, this of Bernard Shaw, against the social folly of his time, against the makers thereof and all their works. So forthright and sincere is it, that we must grant such a mind its way of warfare, and know that the positive degree of conviction begets the

superlative of expression. This habit of hammering hard at the thing just in front of him makes Shaw of all men the one most dangerously liable to misrepresentation when detached from the particular application of his words and not squared by the general tenor of his teaching. In choosing his method, he runs the risk of this. His thought looks to totality of impression and asks on our part sufficient patience and comprehension of his ideas as a whole to act as corrective. And this is just what few readers, and above all few theatre-goers, are willing or able to give; all such prefer the isolated smart saying to the textual meaning. Sometimes, a similar mistake has been made with Oscar Wilde, when critics have said that the sole value of "Lady Windermere's Fan," and "A Woman of No Importance," lay in their clever aphorisms and epigrams, and so overlooked the constructive dramatic virtues of those skilful and charming pieces.

Shaw's method also involves that use of generalization that is effective in the degree that it is dangerous, if one interpret literally. This is more than manner, of course, for it includes

mental processes, but is also rhetorical, a way of securing an effect. Almost any page of Shaw's illustrates the tendency. It is a very delicate question whether an element of wilfulness enters into this method of overstatement. Does Shaw, recognizing that he is rated as a chartered jester, take advantage of that license to use a manner likely to mislead those whom an unkind fate has deprived of a sense of humor? I think his habit of putting the case so much the stronger by the omission of qualifiers, is congenital; but is also accepted by him on the theory that you must strike hard if you would dint numskulls. It is a way of making yourself heard of those who are hard of hearing. Perhaps the author did not fully realize it is also a way of producing puzzle in many minds. The comparative few will make the proper concessions and allowances. The essayist can take up his subject, turn it about, let its many facets flash in succession before us, and in leisured fashion turn it inside out for reflection and analysis. The philosopher can balance and concede, strive for a judicial tone, and leave you in a broad-minded uncertainty as to the conclusion. But the orator

and dramatist both, the latter being an orator in this respect, must be partizan, special pleaders; must strike while the iron is hot; they substitute heat for light. And Shaw in his dialectics is essentially the orator, the rhetorician (as to method) passionately pleading, seeing but the one thing at the moment, and moving heaven and earth to attain his end, which is, conviction on the part of the hearer. This is the technic of *conviction,* as we might call it. What we have a right to demand of the orator is eloquence and honesty; and Shaw has them in full measure.

With this precautionary word, we may take up the evidence of the plays themselves, beginning with

Widowers' Houses

Several Shavian qualities are exhibited in this interesting if tentative piece. It can easily be understood that in 1892 it would not succeed. Its date of production, December 9, 1892, at The Independent Theatre, London, must be qualified by the knowledge that it was begun (as described) seven years earlier, in 1885. If it was

in advance of the day in 1892, it was still more ahead of the time when conceived. Reduced to a brutally condensed statement, the play tells how a young man, loving a girl and winning her, is then repelled by the fact that her father's money is gained by iniquitous landlordism; at first he refuses to have her, but finally, through sex-charm and also because he finds his own money is involved in these questionable investments, returns to her: a sufficiently cynical conclusion. The ending is "pleasant" only for those who do not think and prefer to have the curtain go down on a marriage of whatever quality. In reality, there is a sardonic ring to it; the author's attitude, we feel, would be cynical, except that he does not so much blame Trench, the young lover, in his acceptance under pressure of a lower standard, as he blames us all, society in general. It is society, Shaw shows, that builds up a machine which makes possible such complications. The criticism is not so much of human nature as of the social complex in the meshes of which our weak humanity has become entangled.

The play, compared with more mature work, seems young in definite particulars; the comic

characters are sketchy and exaggerated when set beside such a masterpiece, for example, as William the waiter in "You Never Can Tell." The sociological fervor is obtruded too obviously, and there is an effect of rounding out the plot to a desired conclusion, the reconciliation of the lovers at the expense of logic of characterization; although, as I have noted, it is possible to argue that an average well-meaning fellow like Trench, sensitive to the good but unable under temptation to live up to his ideals, might do exactly what he does: compromise. Technically, the handling testifies in some ways to the date of composition, since it shows conventions since outgrown; both soliloquy and aside are used, though not freely.

But in many respects this drama has the author's earmarks, and announces a new man in the British theatre. We have the device of elaborate stage directions and character delineations, addressed not only to the reader, but, with Shaw, to the intelligent actor, or stage manager, as well; no others need apply! We have the Preface, in its less expanded form, which was to become in the works in general such a weapon,

and such a delightful and illuminating addition to the text itself. We have a keen sense of scene as such, vivid characterization with a feeling for contrasts, and a dialogue which, looking to Ibsen for a realistic model, is in no respects behind him for verisimilitude, vigor, and variety. It is safe to say that no such dialogue had appeared in the English theatre since Congreve. For its earnest, satiric purpose, with the relief of scintillant wit and atmospheric humor, it is unsurpassed. The frequent statement that all Shaw's stage folk talk Shavian language is flatly contradicted by a delightful comic personage like Lickcheese, whose name, by the way, suggests that when the author began dramatic writing, he was willing to do what later he would have eschewed: place descriptive type names upon his stage creatures. On the side of structure, it is worth observing that, like Ibsen, Shaw avoids mere curtain effects, yet has the instinct of the true dramatist for heightened and suspensive moments; the end of the second act is an illustration. This is the French feeling for *coups de théâtre*, with an added ease and naturalness in reproducing life. There is also genuine

progress to a climax, whether the piece be regarded as a love story or social thesis. In the former case, the diagram reads: Act I, engagement; Act II, engagement broken; Act III, making it up. On the other supposition, we have: Act I, a young man innocent of social rottenness; Act II, disillusion; Act III, acceptance of lower standards.

The outstanding feature of "Widowers' Houses," however, is its theme, its note of social protest. It is story and character study for the sake of drawing attention to the evils of slum landlordism and to the fact that we are all implicated in it: caught in the social web, albeit unwittingly, and our brother's keeper, whether we will or no. If the details of story are trimmed to the thesis, it is not easy to see wherein the general picture is not in drawing. Many respectable folk do have investments in insanitary, ramshackle tenements, and are sometimes loath to tear them down in favor of better buildings, when so doing means an assault upon income. Or what is more probable, such seemly people are content to leave the dirty work to those employed for the purpose, without inquiring too

curiously into the minutiæ of the proceedings; their consciences thus being preserved from conviction of sin. And there would seem to be nothing improbable in the spectacle of a young man who has reformatory instincts become worldly-wise when not only his pocket is tapped but the loss of his girl is threatened. It is all one of life's little ironies, familiar enough to the observing mind.

The treatment of love in the play and the conception of woman embodied in Blanche are also definitely Shavian. Shaw cannot abide the usual sentimental depiction of the passion of love. He attacks it on all occasions. I do not recall a seriously tender love scene in the conventional sense in all his dramas. It may be remarked parenthetically, that this affords a striking proof of his power as a dramatist, since the love motive is the central appeal of stage stories, as it is of fiction in general. The Shavian idea is that the life-force for its own biologic purposes provides a sex glamour which hides the facts and in making "love matches" by the million, also makes trouble for the twain and for society at large. He would have men and women realize

what they really are, in order to come together in mutual respect and affection as comrades who shall build homes and conserve the interests of the state. In "Man and Superman," as we shall see, he laughs at his own counsel of perfection; as Ibsen in "The Wild Duck" laughs at his own idealism wrongly applied or embodied. Blanche is a rather unlovely exemplar of the life-force; she gets her man and ethical principles can go hang. She is her father's daughter. It would be quite unfair to name Blanche as a typical Shavian woman. She is simply one aspect, and not a pleasing one, of what he conceives as the truth concerning the sexes.

Altogether, then, "Widowers' Houses" furnished proof of a new talent in the British theatre, and contained some of the distinctive characteristics of the writer, while not without signs of being journeyman work.

The Philanderer

In "The Wild Duck," as stated, Ibsen satirizes the misuse of his own idealism. In "The Philanderer," Shaw's next play, written

in 1893, and like its predecessor for The Independent Theatre, but not produced until February 5, 1907, at the Court Theatre, London, Shaw satirizes the situation when fools and faddists get hold of the Norwegian's ideas and procede to juggle with them in relation to their own lives. This drama has never been one of the pronounced Shaw successes, although it was by no means a failure when seen in New York and Chicago. The less popular early pieces of Shaw, given now as an intelligent theatre audience is fast being prepared by various influences at work, play far better than they did at the time of their first appearance. Still, there is a quality in this play which makes against wide acceptance, and it has definite defects. Primarily, it seems a satire on Ibsen, and this had more pertinence twenty-odd years ago than at present. But it also satirizes certain other social fallacies, which are favorite objects of attack with Shaw: doctors and their profession in general (to be amplified in "The Doctor's Dilemma"), vivisection in particular, and the current laws and conventions of marriage (also to be extended in treatment in "Getting Married"). Because of

these imperfect and foolish laws, Shaw is of the opinion that a type such as the philanderer, Charteris, becomes a frequent phenomenon. We notice here the author's sturdy and oft reiterated faith in the efficacy of legislation to improve upon human nature as it acts and reacts in society and the state.

Regarded as architecture, this dispersedness of attack tends to lessen the effect of unity in the play; as a story, the love affairs of Charteris, though amusing enough, are not of sufficient strength, especially in view of his somewhat unsympathetic character, to justify that side of the appeal. The piece carries largely by reason of its incidental fun, and its cleverness of scene and dialogue. The seriousness of purpose is injured by a levity of tone which has an effect of being for its own sake. Yet a playwright of extraordinary ability is plainly indicated in such a handling of situation as that which closes the first act, or in much of the dialogue, illustrated by this speech of Charteris's:

> CHARTERIS. I tell you seriously, I'm the matter. Julia wants to marry me: I want to marry Grace. Enter Julia. Alarums

and excursions. Exit Grace. Enter you and Craven. Subterfuges and excuses. Exeunt Craven and Julia. And here we are. That's the whole story. Sleep over it. Good night. (*He leaves*).

CUTHBERTSON (*staring after him*). Well, I'll be—(*the act drop descends*).

As a *tour de force*, this sends one back to the fifth act unraveling in "Cymbeline."

The feeling born, rather than made, for theatre effects can be detected throughout this early piece of a man, all of whose work proves the gift. Witness the entrance of Julia in act one, which is but one of several instances. The conductment of the Ibsen talk is in the highest degree an example of keen satiric comedy, with sparkle and palpable hits in every line. For 1916, perhaps the most interesting thing in the play is the contrasted feminine portraiture: we get the woman who grabs her man—an earlier Ann—the womanly woman who waits for him, and, God save the mark, the masculine woman who is neither the clinging vine nor the truculent amazon of the opposite extreme. You can respect the woman who clings as the exponent of a

pleasant tradition; and the woman who conquers, for she helps the race to exist. But the woman who wobbles, being neither Venus nor Lucina, she is an unpalatable joke. So far as he shows any bias, Shaw's sympathy is apparently with Grace, the womanly woman.

Mrs. Warren's Profession

The next play was the first one to make its author a popular issue. It was written the latter part of 1893, for The Independent Theatre, but was first seen at The New Lyric Club in London, January 5, 1902, nearly a decade later; proof of the slow winning of favor by Shaw at this time. It was forbidden by the Censor in 1893, and only privately given in London at the later date; was stopped by the police both in New Haven and New York, when it was produced in America, though afterwards permitted in the metropolis. The date at the Garrick Theatre, New York, was October 30, 1905. It has always been a storm center with Shaw, as has "Ghosts" with Ibsen. To understand it, is to understand the former in

much of his central faith and impulse of work.

The objections to it might be summed up as plain speaking, repellent theme, and a lack of "sentiment" as usually understood, especially in the heroine, Vivie; together with a general hard rationalism in the treatment of sex love and the family relations. Some, too, are offended by the facetiousness and fun introduced in connection with Frank and Praed. Even so doughty a Shavian as biographer Henderson thinks the tone of the play injured in this respect. The only excuse to be offered would be that in a drama so grim and drastic in theme, the alleviation of humor is necessary: something that Ibsen chose to ignore, no doubt to the loss of many followers. It is an artistic question: the question whether the composition is tonally harmed by "the laugh mistimed in tragic presences."

As to the strictures mentioned, short shrift may be made of the first, the frank handling of a disagreeable subject. Modern art has pretty well decided to accept the extension of subject in the interests of a broader study of life and to base judgment upon the question of how the

thing is done. The treatment of sex with Shaw is at once frank and high-minded; if we object to it, we will have none of him. No piece in the Shavian repertory is further removed from any concession to the "pleasant." Distinctly, this is one of the "unpleasant" plays, perhaps the most "unpleasant" of his career. And, it may be to the winning of a better hearing for his views, in his later work he modified the uncompromising, grim austerity of the treatment here.

The situation posited is this: a mother who has made herself wealthy by maintaining houses of ill-fame has kept her daughter in complete ignorance of the fact, given her a college education, reared her as a lady. The daughter discovers the truth, recoils from her mother in disgust, and leaves her forever. The tragedy and pathos of this is found in the mother's sincere love for the daughter; and the suspensive interest (which every good play must have) centers in the question: what will the daughter do?

In the handling of this obviously tremendous situation, there are technical faults. Coincidence is stretched in the meeting of Gardiner and Mrs. Warren; the falling together of Frank and Vivie,

lovers yet bound by kin ties, might be criticised in the same way, as well as on the ground of taste; and the melodrama of the rifle incident in act third is possibly incongruous in such a play; to which, however, the author might reply that he was making a stage play, and had to bear in mind the intellectually overtaxed.

But all such objections, technical or esthetic, are as naught in the face of the vital value of a drama which remains one of the most original and powerful of the day. It has a fine theme, brilliantly written, effectively presented. A daughter brought up in ignorance of her mother's shameful occupation, learns the truth and rejects the mother; there, in more condensed statement than I gave it before, is the argument; its bullet-like brevity shows how dramatic is the play's central idea. There is no better test of a real play than the readiness with which it lends itself to a succinct, clear statement like this. Incidental, it would seem, to the central treatment, the daughter also rejects her lover and goes in for a lifetime of spinster independent work. But this is germane, after all, to Shaw's thesis: that society, not Mrs. Warren, is responsible for

the harlot, and that woman's economic independence, once won, will be the deathblow to that most reverend of all female professions.

The way in which, as a whole, this superb subject-matter is handled cannot but awaken admiration, in all who know technic when they see it.

In the first-act curtain speech, we get a hint of what is to come; in act second the mother is half revealed to her child; in act third the full revelation comes; and the final act shows us the sequent separation. Here is skilfully graduated growth with an organic texture that is close-knit and congruous. The technic is basically that which accepts the formula of Ibsen and adapts it to particular needs and personal feeling. There are but six characters, and the exposition is worked into the body of the play. Yet to use four acts with a number of scene changes savors of twenty years ago. As to characterization, whatever may be thought of Frank and his father, the other three persons are splendid examples of dramatic representation: Mrs. Warren, creature of a vicious system, likable in her way, even admirable at moments in her hon-

est, unrealizing Philistinism, a pathetic, tragic, ironic human figure; a very great piece of portrait drawing; Vivie, intensely the new type of our day, shrinking in every fiber from her mother yet valiantly desirous of doing her justice; hardly inferior to the other two, Praed, an unforgettable picture of the elderly sensualist. The great scene where the mother and daughter clash and part, is on the whole Shaw's most unquestionable *chef d'œuvre* in the manipulation of climax, and one of the very few great serious scenes in English-speaking drama of our generation; paralleled only by Galsworthy's "Justice," Pinero's "The Second Mrs. Tanqueray," and possibly one or two more; and superior to any other for sheer originality. The dialogue in the climactic moments of the action has an idiomatic concision and happy inevitability of phrasing that are above praise. Nothing in the English theatre is better, for its purpose. Memorable lines are frequent, like the terrible one spoken by Mrs. Warren as she tries to convince her daughter: "Every woman has to get some man to be good to her." There is woman's social saga epitomized in one short, simple sentence.

One feels that had Shaw continued to write plays of the caliber of this, he would have been a greater dramatist but might not so successfully have insinuated his teachings.

Certainly in this play the economic and social thinker unslings all his guns in an attack never quite equaled since for bitter insistence and stark presentation. It looks as if he recognized he had been extreme in method here, and decided to mitigate the message hereafter. In any event, the idea of the drama is well worth attention. Shaw believes that poverty is the cardinal social crime: a notion developed more fully in "Major Barbara." Make possible a comfortable living wage for women, recognize maternity at its true value to the state, and you throttle prostitution. If there be fallacy in this, it is to be found in overlooking two classes of women: those who prefer vice for its own sake; and those incapable of earning an honest wage.

In Bernard Shaw's schemes for social betterment in general, there is always the faith in the natural good of human beings: the assumption that if given a chance, they will rise to it. One honors the thinker's generous interpretation,

even if doubtfully querying whether he do not place human nature too high. It is a curious thing that one who seems always declaiming in the spirit of the scoffer against some moral or social backsliding, like a Daniel come to judgment, bases his whole philosophy upon a thoroughly optimistic conception of the ability of human beings to do right when favorably environed to do so. I sincerely believe that this archenemy to all sentimentality becomes romantically sentimental in this favorable opinion of his fellows; and surely he is all the more lovable because of it.

But the main contention that, in such measure as we remove the economic necessity of sin, we tend to lessen the social evil, is sound; and Shaw's drama assuming this, finds its justification, whatever of exaggeration there may be in driving the idea home.

If "Mrs. Warren's Profession" be bad art because its theme is non-esthetic, we must, to be consistent, give up along with it, "Oedipus the King," several of Shakspere's most powerful tragedies, and representative works by Ibsen and Brieux. The condemnation cuts off more heads

than one, and heads that have a kingly look. As a matter of fact, and cause for congratulation, we are hearing less and less of such foolish restrictions upon serious art. The thesis is pat to our day, and worth while, since it deals with one of the permanently important problems of civilization. It is cleanly, strongly, and skilfully handled and the drama containing it is an intellectual stimulant and a social document of great significance. The late William James declared that in this piece Shaw made us see, (as only the stage can make us), the difference between convention and conscience, and showed that you can tell the truth, if you only do it benignantly. Disagreement there will always be as to its place in Shaw's repertory; some would put it at the top. More often, the praise awarded it is timid on the ground of its unpleasantness. To my mind, having stage value, skill, dramatic clinch, and literary execution in view, it belongs with the few masterpieces, if the first position is not to be given it.

Arms and the Man

Shaw was now steadily and vigorously pursuing the vocation of dramatist, although with small encouragement as yet. Both "The Philanderer" and "Mrs. Warren's Profession," as we have seen, were written for The Independent Theatre, but not produced there. His next piece, written in the early months of the following year, 1894, and to prove one of his permanently successful stage plays, was "Arms and the Man," first seen at The Avenue Theatre, London, April 21, where it was played until July 7, an eleven weeks' run and the first indication that his work could make anything like a popular appeal. It was produced by Richard Mansfield at The Herald Square Theatre, New York, September 17, 1894, but its reception was but lukewarm, though the few recognized its merit, and it afforded Mansfield one of the most sympathetic rôles of his career. December of the same year it was given at the Deutsches Theater, Berlin, under the title *Helden.* These facts are a plain proof that the tide had turned and Shaw had become a

man to reckon with in the practical playhouse.

"Arms and the Man" is a brilliant satirical comedy belonging with the group of "pleasant" plays of his own description. It is essentially a drama, an amusing story told within the framework of a conventional plot, but novel in character, treatment and *lebensanschauung*, behind the fun. It was received by some critics as an attack upon the military ideal, and no doubt that is involved; Shaw, generally speaking, protests against war, and often satirizes it. But the reader who puts himself to the trouble to harmonize the opinion expressed in a special play with the author's view in general, will see that Sergius is satirized primarily as a pseudo idealist and that Raina, the woman of his choice, is obsessed with the same notions. Here, as always, Shaw is aiming at the false social ideals which injure human life. In this case, he laughs at the conventional picture of the "hero," who in his spick-and-span uniform exposes himself in front of a tree instead of hiding behind it that he may live to fight another day: Bluntschli's way. In short, Bluntschli is the true soldier,

muddy-booted mercenary though he be, because he strips war of its specious decorative colors and shows it for the grim business it is. He works for wage, does his duty, and wears unbecoming clothes. And Raina, when the scales drop from her eyes, turns from the man-doll Sergius to the real fighter. Incidentally, there is a good deal of irony against family pretensions, pure-blooded nationality, and idealism at large; all of which broadens the appeal of the drama as amusement. And it should be observed that, unlike the preceding plays, the satire is not bitter and savage, but genial and hence all the more effective. The idealists reform, the author seems to be enjoying things himself. The change of tone is noticeable, and no doubt an element in its success. Whether Shaw, struggling playwright, resolved to court a quicker success by conforming to the public desire for theatre entertainment, while just as earnest as ever to present his views, may be left to individual opinion. The important point is, that his principles are not sacrificed; method not view is altered.

"Arms and the Man" is above all a good play. The character drawing is clear, interest-

ing, arresting, well-contrasted. Many of the best bits of dialogue are *mots de caractère*, their wit derived from character and scene, not from the author outside the drama. Not only are the principals, Sergius, Bluntschli, and Raina, firmly limned and delightful, but secondary folk like Petkoff and Catherine are quite as successful in their due place. Shaw does a new thing in the penetrating psychology of the serving class in the persons of Nicola and Louka.

The drama is also conspicuous as stage spectacle and effect. How clever is the first act, and how novel in its use of material that might so easily be made suggestively unpleasant if coarsely handled. Shaw, as noted, is the most daring man of the English theatre in his use of subject-matter and plain speech; but at the same time the freest from offense; this Puritan playwright writes with clean hands and a pure heart, and the most ascetic priest could not be further removed from sensualistic taint. The first act is a capital start to catch the unthinking in a play in which the remaining acts constitute a comedy of character and dialogue rather than action in the usual external sense. Allowing for the difference

between comedy and comi-tragedy, this opening act might be compared with the similar act of Ibsen's "Little Eyolf." The construction, judged conventionally, is peculiar, a good example of the way Shaw blazes trails and broadens stage technic by his freedom of handling. Most often in a three-act drama, good building calls for act one to be longest of the three, and the last the shortest. Acts one, two, and three thus move in a descending scale of time. But in this specimen, act one is by far the briefest; the second act very much the longest, while the final act is less than half the second in length, yet much longer than the first. Compared with the act divisions that are customary, the proportions seem all awry. The reason, of course, lies in the nature of the piece, and the playwright's purpose. Instead of choosing in act first, after the usual fashion, to get his story well underway and to develop characters, he puts an incident before the audience upon which the whole story hangs, and does his main character unfolding in subsequent acts; much what Ibsen does in "Little Eyolf."

In other words, act one is almost like a pro-

logue, in place of the regular exposition which characterizes the *pièce bien fait*, the well-made play of the French. Nevertheless, the few things necessary to know, Sergius's relation to Raina, for instance, are clearly revealed. How natural that device of the photograph to bring this result. Looking to popularity, this method of opening a play is sure to be better liked than the subtler Ibsenian way.

Having, then, got the situation before us in an effective prologue, Shaw lets the story work out logically, with the purpose to show the disillusionment of Raina of her lover and her turning to Bluntschli. And since he desires to prepare the stage for the skilful complications of act third, where obviously the *scène à faire* is to be shown, he takes plenty of time in act second. I would particularly draw attention to the treatment of the situation in the last act, because it is a notable example of his dramaturgy, and one of the most effective bits of craftsmanship in modern comedy; to appreciate it to the full, is to testify to one's knowledge of play-making.

Occasionally, Shaw allows his fun to interfere with psychology: as in Raina's remark about the

washing of one's hands, which is certainly rather startling, and hardly to be expected from a woman of her breeding. And the mating of Sergius and Louka verges on farce, only to be excused by the delicious *reductio ad absurdum* of the Sergian motto, "I never withdraw."

To the thoughtful, "Arms and the Man" is Shavian through and through, and happily so, because surcharged with stimulating suggestion. How remorselessly does he strip war of all its romance, all his work indeed being one battle against the "romance" which to his mind so viciously misleads humanity: and how keen his analysis of so-called bravery, a description that Crane's "Red Badge of Courage" verifies. Bluntschli's purely nervous start when Raina throws away the box of candy is illuminatingly discriminating, and we may admire the superb common sense of the distinction made between physical and moral courage. The proper emphasis is put upon the latter.

The democratic note is strong in the play, as in the passage where "position and worldly goods" are excoriated. As a minor but amusing element in the drama, we may perhaps see a

satiric comment on the grandiloquent air assumed by a small, unimportant principality: the little town in the Balkans takes itself so very seriously!

By writing "Arms and the Man," Shaw made himself known,—at least to those best fitted to judge,—as a playwright who could produce a clever light comedy not without farcical tendencies, of genuine stage quality and acting value, which yet contained food for thought and belongs in that advanced modern theatre where civilized entertainment is offered to the public desiring it; at that time, and still, a rare combination.

In passing it may be worth noting that "Arms and the Man" is the only play of Shaw's so far to be remade into an opera libretto; perhaps it is known to more people as Oscar Strauss's "The Chocolate Soldier" than in its original form.

CHAPTER IV

THE EVIDENCE OF THE PLAYS

"CANDIDA" TO "THE ADMIRABLE BASHVILLE"

Candida

As the drama just described was in popularity and adaptability to theatre needs a step in advance of what went before, so the next play marked a still greater forward movement of the fast-gaining playwright. "Candida," certainly one of his happiest, best, and most representative dramas, to some critics deserving of the place of honor, was written later in the year 1894, which registers "Arms and the Man." It was taken on tour by The Independent Theatre Company, after a première in Aberdeen, during the spring of 1897, again in 1898, and had its first London production on April 6, 1904. Dresden witnessed it November 19, 1903, at the Königliches Schauspielhaus; and it was done in New York at The Princess Theatre, December 9, 1903. Shaw's

first appearance in French was in this piece, the place and time being February 7, 1907, at the Théâtre Royal du Parc in Brussels. The Parisian production dates May 7, 1908. It will be noticed that " Candida " was given in this country before it was in London. And it may be added that the performance of this drama by Arnold Daly in New York was the first popular success in this land secured by any Shaw play. Mansfield's venture had been no more than a critical success.

The remarkable thing about " Candida,"—or one remarkable thing where there are many,—is that it established itself as a genuine theatre piece at once and is hugely liked of the general theatre-going public; yet is in reality, touching suggestion and meaning, a subtle and difficult drama, many readings of which do not altogether quiet guess and theory. When it was read to Sir Charles Wyndham, that actor manager declared it to be twenty years ahead of its time; Shaw waited for the time to catch up with him, and it did so in much less than the allotted twenty years! But " Candida " and its history are instructive, because they testify loudly to the

author's ability to make the double appeal: to interest the general and particular. Again it is a case of new wine in old bottles, and the many are so enamored of the bottles that they do not mind the heady quality of the drink.

Viewed casually, we see this play as a satire on the French triangle of husband, wife, and lover, with the positions deranged; the sensation is secured, not by the fleeing of the wife with the lover, which has been staled into the commonplace by reiteration, but by the wife's cleaving to the husband, which has all the merit of novelty. The comic characters are so funny: Candida's father, the inimitable Prossy, another ten-strike of low comedy, and Marchbanks, who is not so much comic as comi-tragic; and the central scene is so dramatic, that quite apart from the main problem of the piece, there is plenty to amuse and enchain attention.

But altogether aside from its wholesome and enjoyable satire upon an unhealthy sort of play much in vogue at the time and not entirely dead yet, and also setting aside its ample provision in characters, dialogue, and situation for theatre entertainment, what does the drama mean? The

critics are inclined to propose various theories; there is considerable disagreement concerning the author's intention in writing it, and the particular significance he imputes to the clergyman, to Candida herself and to the young poet, Marchbanks; especially to the last two. What just *is* Candida as wife and woman? And what is Marchbanks, as a type in himself and in relation to the married woman whom he fancies himself in love with? Our decision on one of these queries affects the decision on the other. As to the heroine, to call her such, the author proffers us some help, although it is not altogether satisfactory. Whimsically he declares Candida to be outrageous, highly "improper." Dare we trust him here? I take him to mean that she so appears to the conventions, being a life-force woman who in justifying her instincts, her love for her man, is doing that which is above all so-called moral law. In this sense only is she "unprincipled." Far nearer to what Shaw intended in this portraiture is the note, which I quote in Chapter VIII, where the author's general poetic significance is summarized.

When in sportive moments we find him attack-

ing Candida or another we must understand it as an indulgence which he allows himself at the expense of the obtuse. Of course he regards Candida as a completely trustworthy person, and has a real penchant for her.

This granted, you have a cue for Marchbanks. Candida is not a self-indulgent woman who enjoys having an interesting pseudo-Shelley in love with her. Nor in the fine final scene is she auctioning herself off, so to say, to the highest bidder. She never has had a thought of leaving her husband. She simply wishes to teach Marchbanks something of the deeper values of womanhood. And Marchbanks, young and immature and, if you will, silly as he is, is a true poet, and no mistake about it. Secure in her own love for her husband, she can be and is the other's real friend by teaching him the truth about women. She teaches him a nobler conception of woman than his stained-glass idealism; nobler, because based on the truth about human nature; but he, after the manner of the young idealist, will have none of it and leaves what he deems the "greasy Paradise" of a bona fide home for the great outer world of dream, where he may pursue the

"eternal feminine" which draws him on. No *hausfrau* for him. He goes forth with a new note in his voice, according to the stage direction: "a man's voice, no longer a boy's." But he is the picture of the true idealist in this respect; he sees he must chase perfection as he conceives it, give up the attempt at personal happiness because "life is nobler than that." This is the serious and worthy side of Marchbanks, overlooked by most critics, plainly indicated in the valuable light-throwing words above quoted. That the author is making scornful fun of Marchbanks, and nothing else, is flatly contradicted by the fact that he places in his mouth some of the most searching and beautiful sayings about poetry to be found anywhere. As where he cries, "All the love in the world is longing to speak; only it dare not, because it is shy, shy, shy. That is the world's tragedy." And again: when Prossy, with her superb Philistinism, misunderstanding all he says, advises him to go talk to himself, and he replies: "That is what all poets do: they talk to themselves out loud; and the world overhears them. But it's horribly lonely not to hear some one else talk sometimes."

If Shaw did not wish Marchbanks to be sympathetic at all for us, but to appear only as a febrile esthete, he should never have given him such utterances as these: any more than Shakspere, with the purpose of making Shylock repellent, should have written sundry magnificent speeches which make him forever a deeply pathetic, appealing figure. The critics who, at the time of the first presentation of this comedy in America, declared that the poet went out from the Morell house to commit suicide, were certainly, in Shaw's descriptive phrase, "mentally overtaxed."

So much for the characterization. The satiric fun, so sparkling and satisfying, inheres in the situation while it is logical with the characters. Prossy is deliciously consistent in her British imperviousness to aught but the practical; a limited, honest soul. The clergyman assistant is natural in his weakness and strength. The vulgar father, Burgess, may be a bit overdone after the way of Dickens, but is a highly amusing figure in his offensively genial self-approval; inevitably he begets eugenistic questionings as to how a Candida could have come from his loins,

the best answer being that we do not know her mother; or that Bernard Shaw is not averse from poking a little satire at the eugenists, including himself. Morell might have been, in the cheap handling which tries for obvious contrasts, an unsympathetic clerical; instead, he is a thoroughly likable showing of the modern socialist parson, a later Kingsley. His trouble is, that, a good man, he cheats himself as many good men do, with catchwords and theories. If he would just be good naturally, being built that way, and enjoy it, Shaw would quite approve of him. Candida's straightforwardness in relation to him, her delightful feminine seeing-through his supposed strength to his very real weakness and hence need of her, is a master stroke. Here one is reminded of Barrie's heroine in "What Every Woman Knows." Candida's unsubtlety it is that makes her elusive.

Technically, this play is admirable; its construction exhibits organic growth with steadily increasing tension to one of the best climactic scenes in modern drama, in the final act where Candida makes her choice between the two men; an obligatory scene projected so far forward as

to fall at the very end of the piece. The elaborate description with which the play opens is the best example, so far in the list, of Shaw's attempt to do for the reader what scenery does for the spectator. The curtains, though unobtrusive, are excellent. High comedy, with layers of farce, melodrama, and tragedy, is what Shaw has dared and done in "Candida," without wresting it from its genre in that unpleasant way which makes a confusion in the spectator's mind that injures enjoyment. And this, in spite of plenty of puzzlement, both for the wayfaring man and the elect. Truly, it is but by being bold that such breath-taking things can be achieved!

How He Lied to Her Husband

Since the *jeu d'esprit* called "How He Lied to Her Husband" is a pendant to the preceding play, I will violate chronology and discuss it here. Written in 1904, it was produced with "The Man of Destiny" at The Berkeley Lyceum Theatre in New York, September 26 of that year, the two one-act pieces being necessary to

fill out the evening bill. In explaining the circumstances leading him to make this little extravaganza, the author plainly implies that the root of the matter may be found in the dialogue between the two principals (pages 139-40, Brentano's edition), where the wife's romantic intention of elopement is squelched by the very mention of Candida; the play is humorously charged by this would-be Candida as the cause of her own foolish notions, her romanticizing of irregularity. The author laughs at those who are not able to catch its real drift.

The domestic triangle is again used, and romantic obsessions are satirized in a framework of knockabout farce, as Dr. Henderson well calls it; the admirers of "Candida" are warned not to be too serious in thesis-seeking in this, or any other, drama. Those folk who take "Candida" in a too esoteric way are good-humoredly joked about it and advised that they are "mentally overtaxed" once more. A woman is shown loving her husband, as if it were the natural thing to do—however unexpected. The particular fun comes, it should be noticed, from the way

the husband takes the lie and the truth: he resents the truth and wants the lie, and Shaw laughs at us because we all do. The lie is the illusion that makes living attractive. This is definitely Shavian, and the amusing skit must be taken in this way and not be regarded as a key to the major play, which it certainly is not. This conceded, it has its minor place among the lighter and brighter stage moods of a many-minded and often elusive man.

You Never Can Tell

This is one of the cleverest farces, or farce comedies, Shaw has written; possibly the best of them. Norman Hapgood goes so far as to call it the best farce in the tongue. "You Never Can Tell" was begun in 1895, the year after "Candida" was started, and worked on intermittently during that year and later; to be first produced by The London Stage Society on November 24, 1899, the first play of the author to be done by that important organization. Shaw had Cyril Maude in mind in writing it, and it was put in rehearsal by that actor in 1897, but

withdrawn. Mr. Maude has given an amusing account of this, as has the playwright himself; for which the Preface to the play and the Henderson life may be consulted. In 1900, at The Strand Theatre, it was acted with success, which is also true of its New York reception, beginning at The Garden Theatre in 1905. Prosperity has always followed this piece, which is indubitably a favorite judged by box office standards. After the strain and stress of his earlier "unpleasant plays," Shaw seems to have relieved himself, while by no means abandoning his satiric purpose, by making a series of humorous dramas in which the satire, if present, is most unbitterly conveyed and the touch that of a true stage raconteur.

Regarded as a work of art, this play ranges with the choicest of the Shavian repertory. It seems a light bit of fooling, yet is technically so excellent and so characteristic in its viewpoint and handling as to be idiosyncratic; above all, it is steadily diverting. It ranks with "Candida," "Captain Brassbound's Conversion," and "The Man of Destiny," as examples of the right handling of stage material so that amusement re-

mains paramount, whatever the underlying significance of the thought.

Within another conventional framework of story, he has placed characters and opinions that vivify and arouse. No theme seems outstanding, which is one way of saying that no thesis is starkly apparent. Yet many of the serious convictions of the writer are embedded in the drama: William the waiter suggests social cleavages; Gloria, anticipating Ann, the New Woman in conflict with the eternal sex pull; Valentine, an earlier Tanner, is pushed against his will or judgment into matrimony. The dominant thought, I take it, is, that "handsome is as handsome does." While the underplot has to do with the love affairs of Valentine and Gloria, the main tangle involves the events by which Clandon, a husband who has long since turned his back upon his family, returns to them, and receives at their hands a very frosty reception. If you want the perquisites of fatherhood, is Shaw's implicit idea, you must, unlike Clandon, play the part worthily. Why should a husband and father such as this come back and expect flowers and affection to greet the prodigal? As

a matter of fact, his wife is estranged and his children, who have grown up during his absence, remember him unpleasantly, dimly, if at all. Shaw has his fling here at the romantic assumption, "once a father always a father," and denies that the home is sacred unless you treat it sacredly. The genial tone and the corrective of constant laughter carry this off effectively.

A good example of the author's daring realism of detail and setting is seen in his placing of the opening act in the dentist's office; surely, a curtain on a tooth-pulling is a new climax in the English theatre! In technic, the piece is a good answer to those who imagine that Shaw lacks craft in the playhouse; observe the careful preparation of act one for its climax; how wise it was not to draw that tooth. How brilliant too is the curtain of act four! In contrast with acts one and four in this respect, acts two and three have psychological curtains, effective in their way, but less obvious. The love story furnished for those who want it, is tucked into these acts, reserving for truly Shavian interests the final act, to match the first.

The dialogue is a veritable fusillade of wit and one laughs constantly with one's brain, if one has followed the dramatist's injunction and brought it with him! humor, too, of character, situation, and word is plentiful. What could be better, for instance, than Valentine, earning his first fee for six months, and then being invited out to dinner! Or, unable to go to the masked ball, because he hasn't the price. The pairing off of the partners in act four is a fine blend of the humor that inheres in both character and situation.

Like "Candida," the piece shows Shaw's insistence upon plasticity of handling at the expense of "regularity." The time values seem awry again to the superficial glance: act one is not the longest nor the last act the shortest. But reflection indicates that the business of act second is briefly to separate the lovers; and the last act, containing the *scène à faire*, needs more time. In other words, the playwright refuses once more to be stretched upon the iron bed of conventions. His divergences from the usual are no violation of essential laws. The careful artist is behind them. The characterization of the

wise William, surely a masterpiece, is brilliant, yet such a person leads to debate. Are such figures true, or mere Shavian types? I do not hesitate to attribute verisimilitude to the wonderful waiter, nor does Crampton bother me. The women differ; Gloria is perfectly true, her sister is not without exaggeration, and the same may be said of her brother; together they make a most relishable duo of stage figures, if leaning toward farce.

The mother is sound, too. But Valentine appears to be more dubious; he has the earmarks that suggest Shaw himself, as has Tanner later: apparent light-mindedness, intellectual shamelessness, incorrigible levity; he exhibits the unemotional brain with the soft heart, the usual Shavian clash. We are not aware of having met him. Yet does he stand for a truth; perhaps he will become familiar when the pseudo-romantic shall have passed away and we are able to see not through a glass darkly, but face to face. Let us call such a creation a step toward superman. At present, he is an eccentric, an enjoyable droll, and—a convenient mouthpiece. There is an autobiographic smack to Valentine, as in

much of this drama, which but adds to its interest. For one, I am quite willing to believe that the author sees him as verity.

The Man of Destiny

This extremely amusing and boldly novel one-act piece, written in the autumn of 1895, and produced for copyright purposes at Croydon in 1897, was, as has been stated, given with "How He Lied to Her Husband" at The Berkeley Lyceum Theatre, New York. It was aimed originally at Richard Mansfield and Ellen Terry, but these players, perhaps because of the mild reception accorded "Arms and the Man" and "The Devil's Disciple," did not see fit to produce it. Before the joint appearance with "How He Lied to Her Husband," in 1904, this play had been independently given by The American Academy of Dramatic Arts at The Empire Theatre, New York, February 16, 1899. The London première was at The Court Theatre, June 4, 1907, suspiciously later. Berlin did better, for it was seen there at the Neues Theater, February 10, 1904. It may be stated that this

drama and "Captain Brassbound's Conversion" are dramatic compositions in which Shaw did not feel his wings clipped by writing for specific interpreters. Occasionally he seems to have felt that a sharper definition might be given to his meaning if it were placed in the hands of able exponents whom he had in mind from the beginning. Maude, Tree, Irving, Mansfield, and Terry are distinguished players for whom he shaped his material from time to time. His attitude does not appear to argue for those dramatists who protest that to write for anybody in particular (despite the example of Shakspere) is to prostitute their art. No doubt it is best to choose the interpreters, however, for then the impulse is from within, an artistic one. It is temperate to say that, broadly speaking, drama cut to fit personality can be looked upon with suspicion. But to make a play and in the process discover that some actor would well embody the main character, or to have that actor in mind from the beginning, is quite another thing; and it may be taken for granted that this has happened to our playwright in several instances.

As so often with Shaw's lighter and slighter

pieces, " The Man of Destiny " is immensely characteristic; Shavian all through, in conception and details of execution. We may call it but a skit, if we choose, and plainly it stands for a less sober mood; yet it may be that such a mood is the ideal one for literary creation. For amusement primarily, as it seems, such a thing has the function to make us think, nevertheless, and performs it none the less surely because there is pleasure in its dialogue, characters, and scene and the union of them. It is one of several dramas of which " Cæsar and Cleopatra," " Androcles and the Lion," and " Great Catherine " are other titles, where the author blithely proposes to rewrite history and substitute for stock figures out of which the breath of life has passed, flesh-and-blood creatures of reality. He endeavors to psychologize the events which made them genuine personalities, not schoolboy names. It is a realist's attempt to get nearer to the truth of the Past.

His own feeling about it is happily and humorously summed as follows: " A reputation is a mask which a man has to wear just as he has to wear a coat and trousers: it is a disguise we in-

sist on as a point of decency. The result is we have hardly any portraits of men and women. Nobody knows what Dickens was like or what Queen Victoria was like, though their wardrobes are on record." The conventional picture of Napoleon is familiar; instead, we are here shown not an historic dummy but a human being motivated after the facts of known human reaction to life. Really to exhibit a humanized Bonaparte, in his habit as he lived, would be a service rendered to the Natural History of Man, and let it be recalled that it is Shaw's general object to write that history, by his own statement. In this little sketch we see Napoleon as a strong, unscrupulous, selfish man, with a distinct dash of the histrionic, which makes him play to the gallery in order to secure an effect of the noble, altruistic, patriotic. He thus stands out as a figure to illustrate one of Shaw's favorite doctrines: human nature's inclination to mask ruthless strength and egoistic singleness of purpose behind a fine face of Duty. He rather likes Napoleon, since he always likes strength, except when the man of politics and war poses as hero. This desire of the dramatist that we should have

the courage and honesty to call things by their right names and not drape our expression of the will-to-live with moral tags, outcrops continually throughout the plays. The often heard criticism that there is no unity or consistency in Shaw's writings is exactly the reverse of what may truthfully be said: namely, that the author goes to the other extreme and too steadily harps upon his favorite views, however disguised by fable and the manipulation thereof. He is above all things coherent and organic in his attitude toward life. Novelty in the surface matters of story and setting have deceived many as to this essential unity of thought.

The acting value of "The Man of Destiny" is proved in the playing, but can be detected without that test. The tangle of story is ingenious, the characters attract, and the climactic moment, most cleverly approached, is very effective. A definite talent for pictorial and theatric details the piece exhibits. The pungent, peculiar humor that we savor as of Shaw is abundantly in evidence. The significance of the play as a vehicle for Shaw's thought may be found in that speech of Napoleon almost at the end which de-

picts the Englishman from a European vantage point:

"There is nothing so bad or so good that you will not find Englishmen doing it; but you will never find an Englishman in the wrong. He does everything on principle. He fights you on patriotic principles; he robs you on business principles; he enslaves you on imperial principles; he bullies you on manly principles; he supports his king on loyal principles, and cuts off his king's head on republican principles. His watchword is always duty; and he never forgets that the nation which lets its duty get on the opposite side to its interest is lost."

The present European struggle might be used to embroider the theory set forth in the long speech of which I quote the concluding sentences. The effectiveness of it comes largely from its superb avoidance of qualifiers and extenuations.

The story used is simple but of strong interest in the handling. Valuable letters have been lost through the carelessness of one of the officers; they have fallen into the hands of a woman; they must be secured. How? The interweaving is so skilful that the tension is happily maintained to

the very final curtain fall. Sex relations get fresh treatment in the attitude of Napoleon to the female spy; their scene quivers with psychological subtleties. The woman off stage, the General's wife, in her contrast with the woman who is seen, is in her influence almost as potent; together the two give us Shaw's antithetical types. The subsidiary persons of the play are also capital: the asinine lieutenant, and Giuseppe, the delicious innkeeper. Many of Shaw's ten-strikes are to be found in these thumbnail sketches of characters, generally mere foils or fillers of time and space. Some of his best humor, too, comes from their mouths.

The piece, slight though it be, bristles with technical virtues: the whole closing portion of the piece after the entrance of the lieutenant is an admirable *coup de théâtre,* with a brio that is irresistible. The relations of the four *dramatis personæ* are shifted so cunningly that the interest never flags.

The fact that "The Man of Destiny" is more than twice the length of "How He Lied to Her Husband," suggests the plasticity of the one-act form, which can in fifteen minutes, twenty, half

an hour, catch a poignant moment of life and with a condensation that is in itself an advantage give a cross section of the human show which, expanded into an evening, might be less compelling.

The Devil's Disciple

This drama, laid in New England during the Revolution, is one of the most typical examples of Shaw's genius. It is the first of the three "Plays for Puritans," as described by the author. It was begun in 1896, completed the next year, and produced in early May, at The Bijou Theatre, Hammersmith; in Bleecker Hall, Albany, in October of the same year, Richard Mansfield first showed it to the American public. Its London production dates September 26, 1899, at The Princess of Wales Theatre and under the name of "*Teufelskerl*," it was given November 25, 1904, at the Berliner Theater in Berlin.

The Preface conveys a clear idea of the piece, which can be regarded as a story, a character study, and an interpretation of life. As story it is interesting melodrama, psychologized into

something rich and strange. Externally, the plot especially involves three central persons, a husband and wife, and a young man, who, given the chance to pass himself off as the husband and so save the other's life, does so, and is about to be hung in consequence, when the husband explains, and in this way frees him; afterwards being pardoned himself, so that a play which might have been a tragedy turns out melodramatic comedy, and "ends well" for the groundlings.

The intellectual value of this lies in the peculiar motive of the young man in substituting for the husband and in his attitude towards the wife. As Shaw says, the drama is old-fashioned, in that the familiar triangle is again used; in the use of a device like the disguise (so much affected by Shakspere, and recurrent ever since); and in the obvious situation of the final rescue of Dudgeon.

But as character study and idea it is highly original. Dick, the devil's disciple, is set in high relief against a background of eighteenth century Puritans, who illustrate repressive religion; witness their treatment of the child Essie and her natural reaction to Dick, who is kind to her.

Dick stands for practical, healthy goodness, the goodness that *does* things and enters into red-blooded human relations; his apparent impiety is only a sound, honest nature's protest against cant, hypocrisy, formal show, and sham. And he is capable of the greatest self-sacrifice when a test comes.

Thus he exactly fits in with Shaw's general teaching and his ideal of character. Shaw is not attacking Puritanism but its abuse, as seen in certain unlovely manifestations which exhibit it as harsh, cold, negative, external,—husks rather than the sweet kernel of truth. In opposition to this, Dick Dudgeon is a creature who follows his instincts (which are good, notice) and so connects with the life-force. Conventionally, superficially viewed, it appears an attack upon religion; it is in reality an attack upon the immoral masking behind a quasi morality. The handling of the mother-son relation in its implication that this bond must be lived up to if it shall be beautiful, sends us back to "You Never Can Tell."

As for its thesis, this play says in effect: "Do good, not for reward, whether the Puritan's

heaven or another man's wife, but for its own sake, because it is the highest impulse and law of your nature." Thus we see it to be a consistent part of the general Shavian view. It may be doubted if any large section of mankind would act commendably if all selfish emoluments were withheld; but here is one man who prefers action based upon less crass and worldly reasons. Human beings at large may need the golden bait; not so Dudgeon. That is his distinction, that is why he is worthily the protagonist in an unusual play. Shaw has himself stated that the main persons in plays ought not to be average folk but geniuses.

The fun of the thing, and this drama is very funny indeed in the situation thus arranged, is to be found in the wife and her attitude towards Dick. A young and pretty woman, she cannot conceive that Dick could have saved her husband except for love of her; the bait being illegitimate in this case. And the scene in which Dick coolly informs her that he does not love her at all, but did a good act just to be decent, to gratify an impulse of his being in a sudden stress, is a brilliantly novel and amusing theatre stroke; the ob-

ligatory scene of a play which in its final trial scene has further proof of the author's power in stage situation. There is in fact much to admire in the drama's technic. Despite its oddity, it is full of acting values. The part of Dudgeon is so original, so contrary to the tradition of hero and lover, that when the drama was given in London, the impersonator of the rôle actually kissed a tress of the wife's hair at a certain moment, that the audience might not be cheated out of its time-honored enjoyment; thus, of course, coolly ignoring the whole meaning of the play and the dramatist's intention as implied in its every word. The play is another example of new wine in old bottles. It shows us a Nietzschean transvaluation of conventional notions of sex relations. Daring unusualness of idea and characters is so manipulated as to please the general and particular. Act one, which is a capital illustration of unconventionality of craftsmanship, has for its object to create atmosphere and make such a personage as Dudgeon credible; and this is finely done. The action is delayed, for this reason. When you have so novel a character it becomes unusually important to make it live, give it

verisimilitude. As a result of this necessity, the story is started later than is usual with most plays. It is a mark of finer, more original technic to do this; the playwright is cutting his cloth to suit his coat. The technician will note the stage value of Dudgeon's first entrance; the effectivism of the exit, with Judith left in a swoon; the return of the husband; and the handling of the court scene: all examples of skilled conductment and knowledge of stage resource. The conventions are disobeyed in the introduction in the last act of a new set of characters; something dared by that other disturber of conventions, Brieux, in the final act of "Maternity." In Shaw's case, there is far more justification because of the historical nature of the scene, and the result is a triumph of theatre effect.

Not infrequently in Shaw, as we have seen, some speech is crucial. This is true of the speech (page 59, Brentano's edition) where Dick tells Judith why he saved her husband; it was a law of his nature to do the unselfish act.

In the treatment of Burgoyne we note the tendency, already seen, to reconstruct historical personages. The instinct is to look below the

surface, below superficial denotements to essentials, to real psychic facts; in short, to humanize them. Shaw in his Preface declares that the drama's novelty lies in the voicing of the new thought which is part of the spirit of the Time; he implies that it is not *his* thought in opposition to the general view, but he merely reports what is in the air, clairvoyantly. His plays as a whole may be said to owe part (though by no means all) of their significance to this fact; yet he is as far as possible from being an echo. His voice is his own, but it is enriched with overtones that sound the cry of the *zeitgeist*.

Cæsar and Cleopatra

Another drama which displays the author's liking for historical rehabilitation, and one of his most enjoyable creations, is "Cæsar and Cleopatra," which, written in 1898, was produced for copyright purposes at The Theatre Royal, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, May 15, 1899. Its American initial appearance was at The New Amsterdam Theatre, New York, October 30, 1906. More than a year later, at The Savoy, London, on No-

vember 25, 1907, occurred the English première. The piece was played originally by Sir Johnston Forbes Robertson and his wife, Gertrude Elliot, and has been a successful number of their repertory, wherever it has been seen.

At a first reading of this play, and in comparison with close-knit work like "Candida," "Arms and the Man," and "The Devil's Disciple," it seems a straggling, inorganic composition, whatever its merits of detail, and they are numerous. To see it acted, modifies the impression; the general scenic value, the attraction of particular scenes, and the fact that the genre of the piece is that of chronicle history, which from its nature calls for picturesque, varied, and slow-moving treatment, all combine to change the judgment. The drama is seen to be an admirable example of dramaturgy in its kind. Its central significance is that of a character sketch wherein a reconstructed personality becomes a typical Shavian protagonist, a man after Shaw's ideal; presented with humor, satire, and deep fetches of philosophy, and, within the envelope of story, resulting in a veritable contribution to letters. Whether we get nearer to the real Cæsar,

we certainly are helped to get nearer to the life view of Bernard Shaw, which is quite as much worth while. To be offered Cæsar as he was, is not, strictly speaking, a gift coming most naturally and gracefully from the maker of literature: we look to the historian for that.

The conception of this mighty captain of the ancient world is beautifully in harmony with the author's general interpretation of life and men. Cæsar is known of the world as primarily warrior; this, despite a sad knowledge of him as a writer by schoolboys. But Shaw does not admire war as settling the claims of human greatness and therefore insists that one of the few great men of all time must have been great outside that test and consequently so represents him: brave, magnanimous, possessing innate rightness, rather than conventional morality, which means the outward observance of a code. He is kind, unsensual, tolerant, since it is his nature so to be. But he is amiably humanized by weakness; which is amusingly shown in his attitude towards his fifty-two years. Disliking the mere sensualistic picture of his relation to Cleopatra, Shaw throws the cold water of his satiric logic on it

by reminding us of the disparity of their ages; and thus pricks the bubble of Shakspere's romantic treatment. In Shaw's famous attack on the Elizabethan poet, it should be noted that it is neither Shakspere's matchless gift for expression nor his indubitable cunning as a maker of plays which awakens his ire. It is rather his limitation of ideas, bound by the limitations of his time; and he makes the point that a modern dramatist, himself, to illustrate, can be "greater" than the earlier man because he has the advantage of living at a period when thought has advanced and so can begin where the sixteenth century left off. In short, a careful examination will disclose that here as elsewhere it is the intentionally arresting, paradoxical, audacious manner of the thought, not the thought itself, which is offensive, if any offence there be.

It is altogether possible that the altered Cæsar of Shaw's brush may be no nearer the truth than the Cæsar commonly offered; the main thing is that Cæsar is vitalized, and is the cause of stimulating suggestion about human nature. The view of Walkley and others that the author is

incapable of emotionalism hardly bears the test of the mystic speech which introduces the leader to the Sphinx; this question in its relation to his work as a whole, is treated in a later chapter.

Being a comedy of character in a setting of chronicle history, enlivened by episodes and much pictorial appeal, we find the play falls into the older five-act division; has frequent shifts of scene, many persons, massed effects; the familiar denotements of suchlike drama. The incidental satire is rich and varied; it embraces thrusts at war, the military obsession, conventional duty, and English art ideals, with a special compliment to art for art's sake and the ugliness of commercialism. The author's position is also pungently revealed touching revenge and forgiveness. There is plenty of the expected humor of the different sorts suited to the stage. For sheer felicity of phrase and startling brilliance of thought this play is with the few from Shaw's repertory.

"But when I return to Rome," says Cæsar to Cleopatra at one juncture, "I will make laws against these extravagances. I will even get the laws carried out." And as one smiles with keen

appreciation, one recognizes the thorough student of modern governmental methods. It is a great temptation to quote when quotation is once begun; but the reader is recommended to turn to the really great speech (page 194), the deliverance on vengeance, with its thesis that war breeds war, as having a particularly pertinent application at the present time.

The drama, among other things, for its meanings are as varied as is its form, might be taken as a study of the aging man in relation to women; his half-humorous, half-bitter consciousness that his attraction for them, aside from public reputation, is passing, or past.

Captain Brassbound's Conversion

This drama, another proof of versatility, was written during 1898 and 1899, after correspondence with Ellen Terry in 1897. It was produced by The London Stage Society, Strand Theatre, December 16, 1900, and four days later at The Criterion Theatre, London, December 20; its New York production dates January 28, 1907, at The Empire Theatre. Miss Terry had the

leading part in the last two productions. Notable revivals were made in New York, in 1915 by Gertrude Kingston, in 1916 by Grace George. Here is a piece of excellent acting value, devised it would appear primarily for amusement, yet containing much of the Shavian philosophy we are accustomed to look for. Once more a conventional framework of melodrama is used, but within it we are made by means of dialogue and character treatment to reflect upon some of the fundamental issues of life; that, for example, of the relation of kinsfolk, and (recurrent after "Cæsar and Cleopatra") the foolishness of revenge. It is not hard to see why the play is good stage material. Laid in Morocco, it has scenic attraction, much contrast of characters, its individual scenes are of the liveliest description, and the aspects of life it depicts have the charm of exotic unusualness. Moreover, it has a splendid part for the leading player, as Miss Terry amply bore witness when she gave it. Nor is the leading male part far behind, although it is more difficult to envisage its peculiarities. Also, the drama has an unquestionable central scene, the tense culmination of all that goes before,—that

in which Captain Brassbound puts all to the test, and reveals his love to Lady Cicely.

Shaw makes keen but not cruel fun in the story of that phase of the conventional romantic which awards sainthood to a dead mother, irrespective of the facts, and builds up an attitude against others upon the basis of this wrong notion. In the conductment of the fable he may abuse coincidence, but this is unimportant in a play of the kind; the shell is fantastic, and it is the revolutionary power of the ideas which gives it value in any serious sense. The captain has taken the traditional view of law and of motherhood; hence he has made his uncle a villain, and has deified his mother; revenge is his ideal motive, to it he has dedicated his life, and because of it become an outlaw. Contact with Lady Cicely teaches him better. The charm of this character is beyond dispute; nor is it to be confused with the personal appeal of the distinguished player, Ellen Terry, who, at fifty-eight, created the rôle, and was a figure of provocative and elusive delight. But she is quite as truly the embodiment of Shavian notions of life and personality. It is interesting to observe that this fem-

inine character, perhaps the most salient and attractive in his whole gallery of portraits, is at the same time distinctively a type stamped with the author's hallmark. With Lady Cicely we see will flowering in instinctive acts which are wholesome and good because of the sound and sweet nature behind them. She is Shaw's answer to those critics who declare he is all head: "no, messieurs the enemy," we hear him reply; "not head, but will, which involves the emotive nature, and the intuitions and impulses, as well." It will be instructive to compare this woman with the heroines in Mackaye's "Mater," and in several Barrie plays, of which one is "What Every Woman Knows." They belong to the same category, with whatever differences: the woman possessing that peculiar feminine charm with wisdom which has in it a sort of whimsical apparent disregard of law and order and tradition, which refuses to kow-tow to proprieties solemnly evolved by man for the protection of society; yet who can be safely trusted, in all the vital moments of action. And, above all, who is constantly winsome, doing good without being goody-goody.

Technically, the drama is especially interesting for the way it handles masses and marshals events so as to make the characters stand out in grateful relief; for note that it is the sort of play which tends to draw attention away from characterization and fix it upon story. The handling of the respective acts is also worth study. The first is a good example of exposition, the subsidiary persons used for the purpose being in themselves enjoyable, and not mere lay figures; the opening conversation of Drinkwater and Rankin illustrates a characteristic which separates Shaw from all but the best dramatists: I mean his ability to make minor figures distinctive and of value in their own persons. One such character as the inimitable little cockney guttersnipe, Drinkwater, would give a play distinction. He clings to the mind in much the same way as does Silver in Stevenson's "Treasure Island," —rascals both, drawn with that tolerant understanding sympathy in which the brain coöperates with the heart. Act second furnishes the external exciting cause, leaving act third for the true psychological situation, that is, the conversion of Brassbound through Lady Cicely's influ-

ence: which is what Shaw is after. The second-act kidnapping material is divertissement, and makes this an amusing stage play for the general. The gist of the argument may be found in reading from page 301 to the end of the play; one again detects the author's philosophy plainly announced in the Captain's words to Lady Cicely, as he tries to explain how it was with him before she came:

"I don't say I was happy in it; but I wasn't unhappy, because I wasn't drifting. I was steering a course and had work in hand. Give a man health and a course to steer; and he'll never stop to trouble about whether he's happy or not." The one intolerable thing to Shaw is drifting; the wastrel type he cannot abide, not because it is "wicked," but because it is aimless.

Sprinkled through the drama is much of the incidental wit, and satire, and the flashlights upon Life, which signalize the better efforts of the author; the play surely is among his happily creative productions.

The Admirable Bashville: Or Constancy Unrewarded

This trifle, written in 1902-3, was produced on June 7 and 8, by The London Stage Society, at The Imperial Theatre, London. Not to be taken seriously as drama, it is interesting because it was done to escape from the legal technicality of stage copyright, a matter but little understood. The Preface is both amusing and illuminating in giving us the situation. As the title states, it is a three-act blank verse rendering of the author's novel, "Cashel Byron's Profession," fiction which has proved the nearest to popularity of any he has written. He tells us frankly he did it to protect his dramatic rights in his fiction, since, by the iniquitous English copyright laws, anyone could make a stage play of the book, unless the author did so first. In fact, a dramatization of "Cashel Byron's Profession," under that title, was given at Daly's Theatre, New York, with James J. Corbett as the prizefighter. Shaw in his most characteristic style adds that he likes to experiment in blank verse, and since he had but a week to do the

drama in, he threw it into that form as so much easier than prose!

Then follow several pages of criticism of the Elizabethan dramatists which display Shaw, the critic, at his most dazzling of iconoclasm:

At every word a reputation dies.

And when the smoke clears away, one comes to, and realizes that, as usual, truth lurks behind Gargantuan exaggeration.

This little experiment is not to be taken too seriously. The picture of a prizefighter spouting blank verse, and using the stilted *thous* and *thees* of the elder literature is fun in its way; but it is sensible to assume a utilitarian origin for the piece and to conclude that it is likely to take the boards only as a curiosity.

CHAPTER V

THE EVIDENCE OF THE PLAYS

"MAN AND SUPERMAN" TO "GETTING MARRIED"

Man and Superman

"Man and Superman" has always been reckoned as one of the important plays of Bernard Shaw, and to some it stands first on the list. There is no question that it contains his cardinal teaching; moreover, it is one of his really brilliant theatre successes, and demonstrated his stage gift early in his career. Dr. Henderson says it was written during 1903-4, but Shaw declares he worked upon it a year or so earlier than this. In any case, its first performance was by The London Stage Society, May 21, 1905; and its American production dates September 4, of the same year, at The Hudson Theatre, New York. This thoroughly typical piece, as earnest an exposition of his

views as he has given the world and only less drastic than "Mrs. Warren's Profession," because of the nature of its subject and treatment, might be baffling if it were the first approach to Shaw; read without some previous acquaintance with his thought, it would offer many obstacles. But those who have followed me in the development of the writer and thinker, will find it beautifully consistent with the general attitude and meaning.

The main play, omitting the long philosophical scene in the third act, which is not given in the stage presentation, deals with the way in which John Tanner (Shaw under a thin disguise) strives to elude Ann, the woman who loves him and intends to get him, and does. His flight to Europe is useless, and in his heart he recognizes he is a fated victim of matrimony, an estate he intellectually despises, but as mere man, hankers for. In this manipulation of story, the author explodes wittily the pretty theory that woman is the hunted one, man the hunter. Regarded as an organic treatment of plot, the first act, in itself of exceeding interest and great acting value, may be criticised as a deflection from the main

story; it concerns Violet's apparent violation of social conventions and affords Shaw an opportunity to let Tanner declaim against what he considers the prim negations which fail to see that sincere love which results in presenting the community with healthy children has much in its favor. The justification for the act dramatically is to be found in the reflection that it is an added illustration of the general subject of sex relations, a sort of overtone to the central theme of the problem of Ann and John. Its cohesion is that of thesis: it has intellectual unity with the remainder of the play. Violet is another example of the action of the life-force.

Philosophically, the omitted scene of the third act is most important, though dramatically it is nil. In a long argument is expanded the idea that, projecting the influence of Romance beyond the grave, heaven is the good place because the place where reality is attained; hell the bad place, albeit attractive, because the place where people are still fed upon romantic lies, old age, sickness, gross physical facts in general,—being removed. Thus, the act is a logical extension of his views on Romance, mean-

ing the falsities which obscure the relations of the sexes; here presented, as it were, in terms of the eternal. The Preface, to say nothing of the appended Revolutionist's Handbook, must be read to get the full handling of the idea. Don Juan is Shaw, in viewpoint; while in earlier representations he is a sensualistic cynic, in Shaw's hands he is an intellectual one; as the Don Juan of Molière, Byron, Mozart, sees through women and so plays with them physically, so Shaw-Tanner sees through them in a higher sense and satirizes them, although—and this is the humor of it,—he yields to their age-old charm, because the life-force sweeps him off his feet. It is a tribute to Shaw the dramatist to realize that this play is of such acceptance in the theatre. Here is a composition which is an intellectual document beyond cavil, gets its true significance from that fact; but which, after omitting nearly a whole act of the written drama, rather an unusual thing to do in contemporary dramaturgy, yet remains an acting vehicle at which the careless theatre audience laughs heartily and constantly. Those who have witnessed it must concede that in the field of satiric comedy "Man

and Superman" furnishes as enjoyably stimulating an evening as the latter-day stage can offer. Few dramas in stage history create so electrical an atmosphere of alert mental exercise. And the laughs which ripple over the house are of two kinds; the gallery guffaw is there, but also the subdued cachinnation of the brain. Straker arouses the one, where Tanner arouses the other. Whatever unconventionality the drama may be said to display, it achieves the two main things in the playhouse: it pleases, it makes you think.

In dialogue, characterization, situation, it is masterly. To say it has no "action," is puerile, since action in the psychological sense of showing us character development through human clash and crisis it fairly teems with. This is the sort of action desirable in the thoughtful theatre of civilization. Ann, Ramsden, Violet, Tavy, Straker, Tanner himself,—there is no more striking and successful group in modern serious comedy. Surely part of the essence of good drama which we agree depends so much upon clash and crisis in the characters of the play, is also dependent upon the dramatist's ability to present picturesque and salient contrasts of char-

acter; and in this respect, Shaw's plays are conspicuous; moreover, here is one hardly to be surpassed in his repertory. Ann is the conventional, proper woman as exponent of the life-force; Violet, the unconventional woman (so she appears at least) who also expresses the call of the life-force; they are "sisters under the skin," after all. As a corrective of the traditional attitude towards the "lost" woman, this is a healthy antidote.

The climax of the second act may be pointed to as one of those curtain effects which Shaw can command when he chooses to use traditional means to such results; the start of Tanner and his chauffeur in the motor in a wild attempt to escape Ann, is very funny and as effective as it is funny; more original a dozen or more years ago than it seems now; for imitators are ever on the watch and they have been active since.

In respect of the argument that woman is really the hunter, not man, it may be said to contain a half truth, at least, with curious justifications in biological and anthropological history. The dominance of the woman in family and tribe in primitive times; the analogy of the bee; the new exhibition of public power dis-

played by women today, with the more hidden fact of their power behind the throne in all social epochs,—these and other considerations can be brought to bear upon the dramatist's witty use of his idea. His underlying suggestion to man, with respect to woman, might be expressed as follows:—

"My dear Sir, you do not know her; make her acquaintance, try to see her as she really is—for the good of both."

John Bull's Other Island

Written in 1904, this piece was seen at The Court Theatre, in London, on November 1, the same year, this following its rejection by The Irish Literary Theatre for reasons both financial and intellectual. It was produced at The Garrick Theatre, New York, October 10, 1905; and was revived at The Kingston Theatre, London, in February, 1913. At its first appearance it won success, artistic and social, and a performance was commanded by the king. The political situation was such at the time as to make it pertinent. In "John Bull's Other Island," Shaw shows as

plainly as he ever did that he stands for the theatre of ideas; for he most evidently turns his back on story, and studies types and national questions; such drama as there is we must find in their contrasts and clashes.

The framework is of the simplest, and there is little real complication. Two friends, an Irishman and an Englishman, go to Ireland; the Englishman wins in politics and war against the Irishman. Why? Because, says Shaw in effect, of the very dunderheaded blunders and genial misconceptions which make him English. The Irish Larry fails, for the very reason that he knows too much, sees through things, is disillusioned.

Thus the play stakes its claim to our regard fairly and squarely upon its intellectual appeal: on characterization, setting, and idea. In these respects it is an extremely interesting, suggestive example of special pleading; nor should its scenic attraction be overlooked, nor its undoubted merits of situation; the capital scene with Haffigan in act one, the Nora-Broadbent scene at the Tower in act two, the climax in which the pig figures as protagonist in act third,

and the opening scene of act four, are all good drama in their varied ways. But of drama of the traditional sort, that which gives us plot tangle and progression to the cutting of the knot, it is innocent. One's interest does not lie in how it is coming out, save as one cares to see a further revelation of the persons involved. In sharply contrasted and highly enjoyable figures the drama must be placed among the leading works of the author. The buoyant, optimistic, credulous, and conventional, yet very lovable Broadbent; the cool, irritable, clear-witted, disillusioned Larry; the range of other Irishmen from the caddish, bibulous Haffigan, up to the superb mystic, Keegan; Nora, with her faded rustic gentility, an aroma about her like that of a hardy spring flower, so unlike the usual delineation of the Irish maiden that we gasp before her; the several varieties of laborers, down to Patsy, child of the soil and superstition; all of them are the work of one with a remarkable gift for limning human beings who have a knack of getting themselves seen and remembered.

As philosophy, the drama is one of the important documents in the case of Shaw *vs.* his time.

Here is his definite opinion of the Irish question, one of the vital and most complex problems of the day. We Americans are necessarily a little at arm's length on this; its natural difficulties are not bettered by having the sundering seas between us, nor is light thrown helpfully by the Irish-American, as we see him. But by reading the play and the little book which is dubbed, "A Preface for Politicians," we may at least get a clear notion of what Shaw thinks. He believes Ireland can only be satisfied by Home Rule because it is a natural right, rather than because its establishment will of necessity work out a better state of things. He holds that Ireland has gone wrong because she has substituted dreams for the truth. And obviously, here we get the steady Shavian attitude applied to a particular theme. The Englishman indulges in bursts of ideality, romanticism, but always as an agreeable aside, not for a moment to be taken seriously nor allowed to interfere with his real business. There is the difference, the reason he wins.

As usual in the plays at large, various other representative notions are vented: his view of the treatment of animals, for example; Keegan has

a St. Francis' tenderness towards the ass and the grasshopper; he pays his compliments to militarism; and, returning to the mood of "The Man of Destiny," Shaw draws for us with a pen dipped in gall his idea of the typical Britisher. (I refer to the Preface, pp. 38-9.) The reason that Shaw is anything but a pessimist is, that he always believes things will be meliorated, and moreover offers a modus operandi, namely, socialism; we may take it or leave it, as we will; there it is, all explained, his way out of the woods. Those who are fond of calling him pessimist, are deafened by his continual vociferation about the things that are wrong; and so do not hear the constructive part of his message.

That part of the Preface devoted to a description and arraignment of the Denshawai Horror, as a piece of satiric invective deserves to stand beside Stevenson's "Letter to Father Damien." It is a wonderfully eloquent bit of English prose. We also have beautifully expressed, at the play's end, Shaw's political, or politico-religious ideal in the mystic speech of Father Keegan. It is a clear example of the spiritual conception of society which Shaw treasures.

Passion, Poison, and Petrifaction

Or, to give it the full title, "Passion, Poison, and Petrifaction, or The Fatal Gazogene, An Extravaganza." This bit of burlesque nonsense in the author's most rollicking mood of high jinks was written in 1905, and produced on July 14 of that year, in a booth in Hyde Park, London, by Cyril Maude, for whom it was done; the occasion being a fair for the benefit of the Actors' Orphanage. It may be read with joy for what it is: a piece of fooling by a man whose serious moods are sufficiently frequent and who believes that the Roman writer was right in saying that it is wise to be silly at the fitting time. Nothing is funnier about this production, which is not likely to be put into his final and definitive works, than the fact of its origin in a true story told by the author to the children of William Archer. It concerned a cat who by mistake lapped up a saucer of plaster of paris instead of milk, and thereupon became petrified, and was used to prop against a recalcitrant door! It is a comment on the vogue of Shaw to know that even this trifle-of-occasion has been

produced with praise and taken seriously in Vienna!

Major Barbara

Also in 1905 was written and produced another of the abler and more distinctive plays: "Major Barbara," which had its first night at The Court Theatre, London, November 28. For some years it was not ranked among the practically successful dramas of Shaw, but the first American production of the play by Miss Grace George at The Playhouse, New York, during the season of 1915-6, justifies the opinion that it will eventually take its place with real stage favorites, as it certainly will as a brilliant example of the Shavian style, skill, and interpretation. Its failure to make an immediate strong appeal can be explained. The play has been called "a discussion in three acts," and this criticism gives the reason. In a later chapter I take up the general question of the place of dialogue drama, and its legitimacy; let it suffice here to say that in "Major Barbara" plot is not the main thing, idea being paramount, and characters as expository of idea. If the play be static, it is so

only in the sense of story progression; emphatically, it develops as to characters and theme. In that sense, it is truly progressive, and has what might be called the logic of construction. It possesses the highest unity of all, the unity of idea; not material order so much, as what M. Hamon calls "ordonnance intellectuel." Thus, it is not "dramatic," as that word is usually understood. And it is probable that for some time to come most Anglo-Saxons will sit puzzled, uneasy, if not repelled before a play where the clash of ideas furnishes the struggle instead of some trick of complication.

As to story, the play is centrally concerned with the changed attitude brought about in Major Barbara, of the Salvation Army, by the acts and arguments of her father, Mr. Undershaft, millionaire maker of destructive weapons of war; she is made to see that this great religious movement, which preaches poverty as a virtue, cannot exist without money, and that poverty is the prime social sin. She is converted to her father's factory and will marry her lover, as she frankly tells him, because he consents to enter the works and help make explosives;

thereby carrying the logic of destruction to its extreme, helping to exterminate war in the end. The interest here, or main interest, ignoring the side plot of the relation of Barbara's sister Sarah and Lomax, is in watching how her father's daughter comes to see his point of view, and incidentally to secure a husband; and the second is entirely subordinate to the first.

What does the drama aim to do? This is a question it is always well to ask before deciding what it does. Does it purpose primarily to give a picture of a people's religion, and show its wrong attitude towards poverty and the place of money in this world? The depiction of Salvationism, be it noted, is not hostile, nor unfair; full justice is done to the splendid work for the submerged tenth wrought by the organization. But it looks as if Shaw were looking more broadly beyond this specific activity or using it in order to discuss and ventilate the tremendous problems of poverty and crime, in their relation to capitalism and all that word implies. The unemployed, the proletariat, and the rich by so-called tainted money, are in the purview. To make a drama out of such material these large

issues must be connected in some way with a narrower personal complication; Barbara's personality and fate offer this to some extent, but perhaps not sufficiently to make the chief interest. Plot, in other words, is less to the fore than in such plays as "Candida," "Arms and the Man," and "The Devil's Disciple." Concede this, and strong claims to a popular appeal may be made for the piece. Its acting value is surprising.

We are shown a family in its interrelations: two daughters engaged to be married; a wife estranged from her husband; one daughter at outs with her father; a son who is recalcitrant. But the tangle does not center in the readjustment of any of these relations. On the contrary, these relations are used to show their respective points of view, and to compare three of them: the Barbara view, the Undershaft view, and the view of society. The major conflict is between Barbara and her father. But which view wins? This is important, for, according to the established superiority of one of them, is the intention of the author revealed, his argument illustrated. Frankly, the answer is not so easy. Barbara's view can hardly be called victorious,

for she shifts her position through the influence of her father; she comes to see that the Salvation Army must use capitalist money, and not talk nonsense about poverty as a virtue. The mother, representing society, is not victor, because she is only partially reconciled with her husband. If any one's logic of life is established, it is Undershaft's; although he modifies his attitude sufficiently to convince his family, he conquers, after all, for the rest practically accept his position: his wife in her liking of the gun-works, when she visits them, and in her yielding her children to his employment; Barbara, because she adapts her work spiritually to what her father has taught her. Undershaft wins, money talks, the man who invents killing machines is cock of the walk. The conflict between Barbara and Undershaft as types, or embodiments of view,—that is the play in essence, its deepest dramatic cause for being. But granting this idea, in the light of the writer's teaching in general there is puzzle. As usual, we find Shaw facing facts, as they seem to him, whether pleasant or not. The Salvation Army must take "tainted" money, since, if traced to its source,

most money will be found to be "tainted." The Undershaft type of man in modern society is respected, prized, awarded the prizes. He is of the race of the Gatlings, Colts, Krupps, Nobels. It were hypocrisy to deny this.

And what of money, Shakspere's "saint seducing gold"? Is it the root of all evil? Shaw would reverse the idea, declaring it the root of all good and the state resulting from its absence, poverty, to be the arch social sin, as I have said. Socially, and that is always the touchstone for Shaw, this might be accepted without qualification. Money, regarded as stored-up labor, is indeed the prime requisite for progress and a rational social life. Why, then, does one have an uneasy feeling that there is something wrong in the argument of Major Barbara? Something seemingly at variance with Shaw's recognized position on war and sympathy with the under dog in the social struggle? Possibly because there is such a strong smack of the Nietzschean overman about Undershaft. One rebels at his denial of kindness, love, and the rest of the Christian virtues, knowing how often they are exercised and commended by Shaw. Nor is it quite

an escape from the difficulty if we say that Undershaft is not Shaw, but a dramatically objectified viewpoint. Again, we know our Shaw too well. The trouble arises, I believe, in the mixture of two views: the social and the individual, a blend also to be found in "Man and Superman." To put it more plainly, when Bernard Shaw is offering a social panacea, his angle of vision is different from what it is when he is studying a character. He might not, for instance, approve of the application of Undershaft's convictions to society at large; but he cannot for the life of him keep from liking the maker of explosives as a man; since he is strong, sincere, looks facts in the face, states them courageously, though they run counter to the accepted polite ideas, and is economically a boon to the community in his model business organism; one who believes and illustrates that intelligently organized industry is at the bottom of social progress. All this is heartily harmonious with the Shavian doctrine.

But if this explanation be entirely correct, it still remains likely that the drama as a whole will in some respects baffle even the thoughtful

follower, and still more the impatient public which takes its theatre on the run. At times, there is an effect of making a point strongly at the expense of other points. But as to that, it is Shaw's way.

Technically, the play has exceptional scenic values. The first act alone strikingly supports this statement. For characterization flowering in fit and happy dialogue, it is also notable; in the latter particular, the author has hardly excelled it in any other piece from his pen. The opening exposition with its so-rapid tempo, the curtain effect of the off-stage music in act one, and the tension secured by the powder shed in act third will interest all who are watchful for technical achievements in the playhouse. If Lady Cicely be Shaw's most winsome heroine, Barbara is, I verily believe, his finest. In her we see a noble specimen of the author's ideal of womanly possibilities in the modern social setting; she evokes Wordsworth's description:

"I saw her upon nearer view
A Spirit, yet a Woman too.

. . . . . .

A perfect Woman, nobly planned
To warn, to comfort and command;
And yet a Spirit still, and bright
With something of an angel-light."

Barbara has depth, breadth, and height; she thinks strongly, feels sensitively, and hitches her wagon to a star. But she has the fourth dimension too,—charm. Her femininity is not lost in strength, practicality, or professional moral purpose. She is real, yet an ideal; can character creation further go? Barbara is a very solid and fine achievement in dramatic realization. The climax of her teaching is to do right for its own sake, without bribes; and her high words come forth from her woman's mouth with a thrilling insistence:

"I have got rid of the bribe of bread. I have got rid of the bribe of heaven. Let God's work be done for its own sake; the work he had to create us to do because it cannot be done except by living men and women."

One feels instinctively that Emerson would have liked that.

The Doctor's Dilemma

This powerful and in many ways debatable drama was penned in the summer and autumn of 1906, produced at The Court Theatre, London, November 20 of the same year, at the Deutsches Theater, Berlin, in 1908, and not seen in the United States until the season of 1914-5, the date being March 29, and the place Wallack's Theatre, Granville Barker making the play a leading feature of his successful New York season. From the first the drama was sharply criticized, its supposed attack upon or showing up of the medical profession naturally awakening indignant protest and opposition.

It was attacked both as art and life. As art, because it was said to be undramatic in texture and fantastically improbable in subject-matter; as life because, so its opponents declared, it was an unwarranted and absurd onslaught upon the healing clan.

It is illuminating to know that the theme of the piece was suggested by an incident observed by the author; the doctor's dilemma was taken direct from life, since a physician actually had

to make a choice between giving a hospital bed to a gifted but morally contemptible person or to another who, of excellent character, was not a genius. To frame this stimulating query, which is really a casuistical question, Shaw shows us the *ménage* Dubedat: the lovely wife devoted to her erring, fascinating husband, believing in him blindly; the artist himself, debonair, living by the esthetic ideal, and quite impervious to the common notions of marital and financial honor; and the doctor who must choose whether to save this brilliant rascal at the expense of his worthy but commonplace doctor friend; the problem being further very much complicated through the additional fact that said physician loves Dubedat's spouse, and so has a selfish reason for wishing him removed.

As a conception, it may be seen this is first-class dramatic material. But does the nature of the subject debar it from artistic handling? And more, does the particular way in which Shaw handles it result in bad art? To hear this drama played is to realize that it contains some of the finest things in all his play-making: yet, also, to be baffled by details of treatment and

perhaps offended by them. Shaw breaks conventional rules here, but in doing so is as far as possible from being dull or mal-expert. As a stage story, "The Doctor's Dilemma" is much superior to "John Bull's Other Island" and "Major Barbara." Growth, suspense, climax, are all supplied and cleverly manipulated. The characterization of the group of doctors is remarkable for differentiation into types, each distinct as he is amusing and suggestive. In complete contrast is the study of the esthete husband, whose credo is *L'Art pour l'Art;* he alone would remove the play from the category of the commonplace. He is a wonderful picture of a kind of human being whom we must recognize as existing and to be reckoned with. Shaw's portrait is as true and penetrating as anything in print concerning the irresponsible Bohemian and nowhere does the dramatist show himself more the artist than in drawing him; for he abhors the type represented by Louis, all his instincts and habits being against it; yet as a dramatist he so objectifies the treatment as to create in the death scene a deep sympathy for the artist who dies true to his ideals as he sees them. A plucky

Pagan gets justice from a reformatory Puritan! This scene, it seems to me, is the one to point to when it is claimed that Shaw's figures are always Shaw. There is no more striking proof of his power and of its unusual quality.

Hardly less fine for portraiture is the wife in her adoring trust, her blindness to Louis's true nature. How superb the irony of her idealization of him after his death. She is an exquisitely right piece of drawing; there is a suggestion at the end that she hits closest to the truth about her husband, after all. The psychology of these two is profound and moving. We get from it a sense of the complex nature of human beings and the difficulty of deciding in questions of character; and with it, the suggestion that it is creation's way to take imperfect vessels and use them for high purposes, the common water of humanity is poured into the Holy Grail of the spirit, and so converted into mystic wine.

Dramatically, intellectually, we have Bernard Shaw at his best: wit, humor, satire, pathos, philosophy, are embodied in a dramatic coil. The ending has been objected to as an unsatisfactorily flippant way to close the treatment;

the tag line, "then it was disinterested murder," being too obviously a theatre trick. But it seems to me this is more than a *coup;* it is not only a clever line coming out of the situation, but also one natural to Dr. Ridgeon, who speaks it, while it throws light on the plot. Ridgeon, being in love with Louis's wife, allowed this to obscure for him the ethical issue. The moment the wife reveals to him that she has married again, her "my husband!" makes the spiritual test clear to him, and his declaration of "disinterested murder" is a flashlight on his mental processes, justifying him to himself. It is theatre effectivism used in the cause of sound psychology and a high purpose.

But what of the main intention, the showing up of the medical profession? To begin with, we must concede that the way of doing it is the now familiar Shavian method of overemphasis for the sake of making the point. Hit the nail, hit it hard and ringingly, and never mind the surrounding wood! To get his meaning, we must, as we have seen, grant this method to Shaw. It is a concession to a temperament—call it Celtic, if that helps,—which believes too in-

tensely not to get heated by its own movement.

With this understood, there is much of truth in the picture. To put it scholastically, if there be *suppressio veri* here, there is no *expressio falsi;* and the unconscious suppression of truth, though misleading, is not vicious. More than half a century ago in America, a physician who also happened to have the writing gift, Dr. Holmes, pointed out the chicanery and pretense of that calling; Shaw does it later and is no whit harder on the craft than was "The Autocrat of the Breakfast Table." One has only to read the Preface to see that he respects and appreciates the noble men who serve man's body; he simply draws attention to the profession's dangers as now conducted; and suggests state control as a remedy, as one might expect the socialist to do. Since the play appeared, municipal doctors have become a fact in London. The idea is, that to make a man's selfish interests unrestrainedly coincide with an easy line of conduct is subjecting him to a strain too great to be advisable. A physician's view of the argument should not be taken exclusively, any more than a soldier's view

of war; both are too much concerned in the result, it is hard for them to be dispassionate. No profession fails to find perfectly honest arguments in its own favor. If you doubt it, talk with a brewer. The notion that the state or city should regulate medicine is part of the enlightened thought of our day; it is suggestively touched upon in Herrick's novel, "The Healer." Shaw admires the individual doctor immensely, but feels that no profession should be subjected to such temptation; it is the system that is arraigned. We hear the publicist speaking.

The absurdities of materia medica have shifted since Dr. Holmes held forth at their expense, although the solemn pretense of Latin prescriptions is still with us; Shaw attacks what is current, and with ungloved fists. Most of us have become more or less disillusioned at the mistakes which go under the name of science; yet most of us also cling to the fact that the trained physician is a man of science where we are laymen, and a very helpful one in time of trouble. But Shaw has his fun at the mistakes. The modern medic sniffs at blood-letting but perhaps makes a

fetish of blood pressure; he urges the once forbidden fresh air upon pneumonia patients. Cereals are a fad in one decade to be described as only fit for animals in the next. The diagnosis of one specialist is absolutely denied by another. Half of our friends are alive because they went about their business and thrived after the doom-promising prognosis of some high-priced leech. It is small wonder that Christian Science has flourished. There is ground enough in these things to enable a satirist to walk with a firm tread. Yet it would seem as if Shaw went altogether too far when he scorns vaccination and all its works. His mystic streak certainly becomes tyrannously prominent when he will have none of the germ theory of disease. His most definite condemnation of vivisection is contained in this drama and its illuminating introduction. Here, the matter is more debatable, of course. The writer's passionate hatred of the taking of brute life and his vegetarian habit come into the reckoning. The fine moral ring of the attitude, whether right or wrong, wins respect. Ethically, it is hard to rebut the argument that it is a wrong way to eliminate disease, (conceding

that vivisection produces that result, which Shaw denies), to behave dishonorably toward our fellow creatures, the animals. With the rapid advance of modern thought it is becoming a somewhat rococo use of the intellect to declare that since the brutes have no souls and no future, we have a right to torture them in the alleged interests of science.

There seems to be at times an almost mediæval rejection of the achievements of modern science in Shaw, a fairly astonishing thing, coming from one who in some ways is so hardheadedly contemporaneous. But looking aside from the mystic strain referred to, it may also be said that we get here not so much the rejection of science as a protest against the absurdly hasty claims to scientific accuracy and finality in an empirical field, where too often pseudo-science goes strutting as final truth. The induction in this vast and changing field of knowledge is still incomplete. Nor is this to deny the marvelous advances, especially in the domain of surgery. Nevertheless, it may well be that just now we are a little taken with Bacteria; if the B. B. way of using opsonin seem farcical, it is only stage en-

largement of the truth, like the relation of caricature to the human face.

In this drama, then, improbable as to incident and intrigue though it may be, there is impressive psychological truth, and the verities of character are not tampered with. The curious scene of the artist's death reveals the author in his strength, but also in a weakness which is the defect of his quality. He attempts what is well-nigh impossible—in the playhouse. He treats a death with the mingled pathos and sardonic humor doubtless juxtaposed occasionally by the vast indifference of Nature, since she is a lady who manifests a total lack of the sense of humor herself. But that life does this, is no sure certificate for art; and wonderful as this scene is, it remains questionable, because of its failure to be sensitively aware that some things should not be placed together. There is an element of resentful pain when the gravity of death and the levity of man are sharply set side by side; such violent fellowship gives one an odd sense of unfitness. The continence of art is not quite conserved, one feels. Perhaps this is why so original a play, and one of decided acting value, has not

been liked so well as many others. It should be borne in mind that the death was inserted on a challenge from Mr. A. B. Walkley, who meant it as a charge of limitation; he believed Shaw's art wavered before a fundamental crisis of life. In short, the scene was written as a vindication and partakes of the nature of a *tour de force.* Yet when all is said, it remains, in its strange, half-fascinating, half-repellent way, one of the most powerful and compelling pieces of dramatic writing in a generation. The fact that the story is hardly started in the first act is no fault in "The Doctor's Dilemma," since the object is to give a full-length series of portraits and create the proper atmosphere in which the story is later to breathe and have its being. We have seen the same first-act treatment in "The Devil's Disciple."

The Interlude at The Playhouse

This was written for Cyril Maude at the opening of his new theatre, The Playhouse, January 28, 1907, and was published in *The Daily Mail* of London the next day. It served

as Prologue to introduce the main piece, "Toddles," and showed the wife of a manager pleading to the audience in behalf of her husband who is embarrassed at having to make a speech. It is a sparkling bit and not without its point in hinting the differentiating advantages of sex.

Getting Married

Whatever its appeal as play, "Getting Married" is one of the more important items in Shaw's catalogue judged for its intellectual significance. It was written in 1908, and first produced at The Haymarket, London, May 12, 1908. The drama is preceded by a long Preface, one of the most elaborate he has sent forth, and a thoroughly characteristic effort for keenness, wit, and whimsical indulgence in paradox and overstatement. The play itself is a discussion in one scene and a continuous performance (with the author's consent, it was performed with two intermissions) of a social problem of vital import. The form chosen is of interest in view of the author's reference to it as an experimental extended use of the one-act drama. The fact

that Shaw selected such a mould indicates the nature of the play; a single situation presented without conventional plot development, for the sake of exhibiting the reactions of character in a crisis which illustrates an argument. The writer desires to show the confused and to him ridiculous condition of the present marriage laws and ideals; and to that end, marshals a number of couples who stand for the main varieties of the workings of such: a young pair who are going into marriage without realizing its limitations and are checked at the threshold by one of its many absurdities; a high-class old maid and uxorious bachelor; a typical *ménage à trois* in Leo, Regy, and Hotchkiss; a typical celibate, Soames; an example in the bishop and his spouse of a couple well along in life who have weathered the storms, and incline to take things as they are; a much married man, Collins; and, most original of all this piquant assemblage of the matrimonially entangled, Mrs. George, the Mayoress, who with Hotchkiss seems to suggest the frequent irregularities which exist beneath the apparent smug respectability of the usual union.

By bringing together this group, so remarkable for contrast and saliency, and by brilliant dialogue and arresting scene, Shaw keeps us interested and amused while he rams home his views. There is a central interest in the question whether Edith and her man will or will not get themselves married; the play has its dramatic validity just there. And an effect of climax is secured when they finally take the matter into their own hands and have, not the public ceremony that all had planned, but a private one. It is not a fair statement to say that the play lacks entirely in growth and story attraction. A juster way to put it would be to say that its thesis is plainly exposed and its method that of character caught in a crucial situation, rather than carried along by plot. Given its purpose, the technic is sound; that it will never be as popular as other dramas from this hand is pretty safe to guess; the nature of both theme and handling forbids it. With an unusual aim, the dramatist chose an unusual method to put his ideas before an audience; there was no lack of skill about it; wilfully Shaw adopted his procedure here. The play contains plenty of

proof of craftsmanship. Observe, for one little instance, the careful manner in which the final appearance of Mrs. George is prepared for, "planted" as the phrase goes, by Collins' talk about her on the first page. This preparation is one of the sure tests of a genuine dramatist and the tyro constantly overlooks it.

But the idea and argument claim attention. The play stands or falls by its intellectual interest. It is a play of ideas, or it is nothing.

However elaborate the development of the thought, the author's position is clear. To him, the present marriage laws are bad, and the solution is easy divorce: there it is, stated in a single sentence, and as a thought sufficiently shocking to many. Some think we shall get rid of marriage entirely, projecting their dream far ahead in time. Not so Shaw. By precept and example, he shows we must practically, and for the present, preserve the institution; that the thing to do is to improve, not abolish it. All statements that his aim is to destroy rather than modify, are based on a failure to read and understand his words.

But there remain several reasons why the play

may awaken opposition. First, the levity of the prevailing tone; this, of course, being typical of the writer. The composition becomes the more amusing by this lightness of touch and hence better drama; but in so serious a matter, the fun may get in the way of the underlying earnest intention, always a likely happening with our author.

Then, there is the unpleasantness of the plain speaking. If we are to avoid the unpleasant in a dramatist who declares he can and should no more dodge giving pain than a dentist, then adieu Shaw. Another probable drawback is the detachment of the argument from sentiment: the sentiment which naturally and properly gathers about the union of two people who love each other. There are times when our sensibilities are jarred so that we wince. It is the old conflict: a warm-hearted, sentimentally inclined man trying to separate head and heart, because he believes it the only way to see clear on a vital question. And we must be willing to be made uncomfortable with him.

But is his contention true? The query pierces to the root of the matter. Allowing for the

Shavian method of perfervid rhetoric, overstatement for vividness' sake, the picture of the wrongs now existing in the marriage relation is not unfairly drawn. Logically, too, the remedy suggested, that of easy divorce, upon the complaint of either party to the contract for whatever cause, is plausible. The defect in the reasoning lies in the assumption of human nature as commonly trustworthy in the premises.

It would work beautifully with Shaw and his kind of normal, right-minded folk, who have the high ideals of matrimony which are based upon the sound belief that love alone justifies such union. But how would it work, by and large?

For example: suppose a man and woman could get a divorce for the asking. If one of them were a light person, he or she would in response to a whim or because of a penchant for somebody else, secure liberty. Follow that person and see what happens. It is a little difficult to imagine a wise conservation of the interests of the child in such cases. The idea of the open door removing the feeling of prison is sound. And, let it be repeated, the fundamental thought of a right union is nothing but admirable. If

only poor human nature could be relied upon to live up to it! An ideal, properly viewed, is something not yet attained, but conceivably attainable; perhaps Shaw's idea (an idea is an ideal that has arrived) would work as well as, even better than, the present chaotic fumbling towards readjustment. So far, there is not so much a plan as a welter. With existent prejudices, the Shaw plan is not likely to be tried. Meanwhile, we can respect a theory which aims so high, and has such a conception of humanity.

There are passages in this drama which reveal Shaw in some of his most effective and characteristic phases. His sense of poetry is finely brought out in the clairvoyant speech of Mrs. George. And the argument in the Preface that woman's political enfranchisement would materially assist her in the married relation, not only affords a clear idea of his feeling about suffrage (fortified later in "Press Cuttings"), but offers a suggestion to the workers in that cause which is distinctly valuable.

CHAPTER VI

THE EVIDENCE OF THE PLAYS

"THE SHOWING-UP OF BLANCO POSNET" TO "THE MUSIC CURE"

The Showing-up of Blanco Posnet

Written in 1909, and finished in March of that year, "The Showing-up of Blanco Posnet," another of the author's characteristic pieces, was produced at The Abbey Theatre in Dublin, August 25, 1909, and was played by the Irish Players in America, during the season of 1911-2, as well as later. It was given by The Stage Society in London after its Dublin première, technically outside the law, for it had been censored by the Lord Chamberlain; it was afterwards licensed by that dignitary on conditions so absurd as to preclude the possibility of performance, as may be read at the close of the Preface to the printed play.

This moving drama, which is likely to be reck-

oned with steadily as one of the books thoroughly expressive of the author's thought, is interesting in both form and substance. It is in that one-act mould which is so often used in the later work of Shaw as to suggest that he finds it conveniently plastic to his mature purposes. It is also unique among his works in having the United States for locale, although early America was used in "The Devil's Disciple." So little does the author apparently care for that superficial accuracy which is the end of unimaginative "realists," that he has been anything but actual in his picture of Bret Harte types in their western habitat. Surely, if Shaw had sought an effect of "truth" in the external sense, he would not have had his cowboys address each other as "old son"; and would have set his scene right in various other particulars of speech or furniture.

It almost seems as if he purposely exhibited indifference in such details, in order to remind the reader, or auditor, that the higher truth is there; drawing attention to what he is after. For it *is* there, beyond debate; he has never done human beings with more convincing psychology, and never has spiritual truth shone more flamingly

through the supposedly opaque medium of western "bad men."

Yet this superficial "untruth" is such as to repel some critics; Professor Edward Everett Hale, for one. It might be argued that, in a work of art, to dispel the illusion by inartistic details, which destroy verisimilitude, is a sin against that spirit of truth which must lie behind the desired result of conviction. "Conviction of sin" is what Shaw is after in this piece. Be that as it may, an irresistible breath of spiritual reality, I feel, blows out from this rough and ready depiction of primitive folk. The spirit of good which is in common man was never brought out by Shaw more forcefully and touchingly.

With the true instinct of a dramatist aware that a one-act piece must center on the obligatory scene which is at the heart of any good play, Shaw presents his story in terms of the tense trial picture which is the climax of all that has gone before; here his method is that of Ibsen. The characterization is clear, varied, convincing; pictorially, there is great value in the court room with its fringe of eager toughs surrounding Blanco and the jury, broken in upon

by the women who change the complexion of the case. The "boys" constitute a sort of crude Greek chorus, and the individualized figures of the sheriff, the Elder, Feemy, Blanco himself, stand out in high relief. The exposition, though very direct, is plausible and skilful. The general atmosphere of a primitive community ruled by the fundamenal principles that make human intercourse possible under any conditions,—"revenge is a wild kind of justice," says Bacon,—is capitally caught. For stage effectiveness, the piece must be placed high up in the Shaw repertory; the Irish Players were not altogether suited to it, and full justice awaits it in the hands of a skilful American company. No example of his craft affords a better chance to study growth and increase of tension; note how the seeming climax is put off by the arrival of later witnesses, to make the final effect the greater. In external form, it is frank melodrama, with the traditional good ending: Shaw again pouring new wine into the old bottles. But melodrama as it is, it is also a psychologic study of which the theme is the dealings of God with a human soul.

The conception of religion and of God here

makes one think of Bunyan, and the Salvation Army! Blanco wants to be wicked, finds he cannot; he prefers the company of bad people, and is afraid to be alone, because a good person, God, will get at him. He has a vision, like Saul of Tarsus. The play is a clear justification of Chesterton's remark that Shaw is a Puritan; not only in his desire to deal with moral problems and reform his fellow-men, but in his conception of the relation of deity to dust. The play is a close companion to "The Devil's Disciple," in its insistence on doing good for its own sake, without ulterior motive or reward. Poor Blanco, in fact, is puzzled by the kind of heavenly trick which has been played upon him; in sharp contrast with him, doing right in spite of himself and for mystic, unworldly reasons, is set the elder, with his "other worldliness," as George Eliot has acutely called it. It is the idea of man caught in Stevenson's phrase, "we are doomed to some nobility"; Blanco does not wish to be noble, but is obscurely pushed in that direction by a power greater than himself, dumbly trusted by this western "tough."

The picture of Blanco realizing that there

are two games being played by him (and by all of us), the devil's game and God's, to use the old-fashioned theologic nomenclature, is painted with broad, effective strokes, in a way to make the final scene with his culminating speech as fine a thing as the author has ever given us, and certainly one of the moments in his dramatic writing when we come very close to the essential thinker and teacher. If he is ever serious, it is here; if there is a passage anywhere in his works in which Shaw's social sympathy and his idealistic faith in the life-force is plainly stated, it is when Blanco Posnet harangues those rough miners who are somewhat dazed to find the man they are about to acquit of a death penalty suddenly turning their judge and bringing them to the court, not of Judge Lynch, but of eternal justice. The dramatic value of his words at such a moment in such a setting, needs only to be heard to be felt. It is one of a half dozen pronunciamentos of the author wherein we get close to his inmost thought, and conviction and hear the very heart-beats of his meaning. The passage appears later in this book.

The play has added importance because of the

acute analysis in the Preface of the censorship, with all its weakness and opportunity for working harm. Shaw gives us a fine plea for liberty in Art; it belongs to the lineage of Milton's "Areopagitica." The writer shows himself a democrat in his willingness to trust the judgment of the people rather than that of any official: a position which may easily be turned against him if we come to consider his belief in Socialism with its inevitable use of the same officialism. But in its setting here, it is full of an eloquent cogency; the grotesque spectacle of plays like "Mrs. Warren's Profession" and "The Showing-up of Blanco Posnet," to say nothing of "Press Cuttings," being debarred from licensed hearing in a land that smiles complacently over the undraped vulgarity and indecency of the average burlesque and musical comedy, offers full opportunity for the satirist, and the chance is taken.

Press Cuttings

This scintillant example of Shaw's lighter touch and mood was presented by The Civic and Dramatic Guild at the Royal Court Theatre,

London, July 9, 1909, having been composed during March and April of that year. It was stopped because of political references, and given with slight changes September 27, at Manchester. It shows the author at his best in the one-act form, which lends itself especially to topical treatment with the desired point and brevity. It is wide of the mark to describe it (it has been so described) as an anti-suffragist screed; it does not give the impression of *for*, or *against*. Not a polemic, but a work of art, it makes unbitter, non-partisan fun of vulnerable points in the armor of either movement as it exposes itself to the satirist. It would certainly be very difficult to detect a bias in Shaw in his depiction of Mrs. Banger and Lady Corinthia, antis; in making sport of them, he indirectly might be said to praise their opponents. With a wider vision, he looks beyond either party to find his amusement in human nature, as such. He refuses to let us catch him napping. At the end, we find him on the side lines, amiably looking on at the battle and enjoying all the fruits of neutrality. He has had his dig at masculine women, at women who use the sex-pull for political purposes, at

men who flatter themselves they rule, when woman is really the power behind their potherings; and back of these satiric flings, the larger questions of war and peace, militarism, and the economic and political relations of the individual to government, are hit off in a way to make jocoseria carry an aftertaste of thought. Mrs. Farrell (another minor character looming large) is as masterly as she is womanly, to be placed for success, given the lesser scale, beside William in "You Never Can Tell." Her humorsome comparison between killing men in war and making them again in childbed, with woman paying the damages, is unforgettable.

For sheer good-hearted fun, for sparkling dialogue from the mouths of immensely enjoyable persons, Shaw has never been happier. "Press Cuttings" is a success in its kind. It sets up as an avowed aim to secure merriment out of the comic possibilities of current events and personages: leaders like Asquith and Kitchener, the thin disguise of whose names cheats nobody out of the pleasure of recognition. It hardly needs be said that the genial use for literary purposes of a distinguished figure like the late

Earl Kitchener must be related to the fact that the play was written some years before his death. It is thoughtful burlesque, which seems a new genre, and the thought is there. There is much of the Shavian in Mitchener's final remark to Balsquith:

"The moral for you is, you've got to give up treating women as angels." We at once find the author expressing a general attitude. It may be emphasized that there is a pairing off of the couples in conclusion, as in "Man and Superman"; again, Shaw is frankly conceding the great purposes of Nature, let him (or another) scoff or carp as he will.

Shaw's sense of stage effects is shown in Balsquith's entrance disguised as a woman; nothing could be better theatrically; and the telephone talk of Mrs. Farrell with her daughter is so good as to condone the use of that overworked instrument. Seven years ago, when the play was written, the advantages of the telephone as first aid to the dramatist had not been so freely exploited. So true is it that this admirable little piece is not a suffragist manifesto nor in any sense a propagandist effort, that it might better

be described as a satire on politics in relation to the military question, the woman question naturally coming into the discussion. Give the army civil rights and the women votes, says the orderly, which appears to be very much the author's notion also. It should not be overlooked that the title with its implied origin of the play in the daily press is a part of the satire of this keen and brilliant presentation of current social issues.

Misalliance

In the contention that Shaw's plays are not plays at all (meaning that some of them lack the familiar play physiognomy), this one-act piece might be used as a test case. Strictly, it isn't drama as that word is traditionally used; for it lacks story, direction toward climax, growth, climax itself, and conclusion. And yet, reading it, we are confronted with the paradox that it is intensely interesting. Why? Here again one is puzzled by the question whether anything on the stage in the form of scene, dialogue, and action by human beings, that holds the amused attention of an audience, is not properly to be defined as a play.

"Misalliance" was written during 1909-10, and produced at the Haymarket Theatre, London, February 23 of the latter year. It has not up to the present writing been done professionally in America. The author calls it "a debate in one sitting," and a facetious chronicler at the time of its début declared that the debating society is found in a lunatic asylum where, without motion or chairman, the members argue aimlessly and during this irresponsible talk the Shavian tenets respecting love, marriage, and the duty of parents and children, especially the former, are electrically set forth. It is true enough that the people gathered together at the country residence of John Tarleton, rich manufacturer of Tarleton Underwear, are not ordinary folk; one fairly gasps at their utterances, so far are they away from the conventionalized patter of the stage: the obvious replies to obvious questions proponed by obvious types of human beings. The elder Tarleton himself, his son Johnny, Lord Summerhays, distinguished administrator just home from India; his son, the delightful Bentley, whose pet name of Bunny is a revelation of his personality; Hypatia, Tarle-

ton's daughter, engaged to Bentley; her mother, old-fashioned and shrewd, and the ancillary characters who surround these central persons and help to solve the main business of mating the girl of the house,—such as these are not met every day, in the theatre or in life. One asks if they exist, outside the fertile brain of their creator, very much as one asked it of the characters of Charles Dickens. This can never be decided as a question of science can be; the personal equation will settle it at the last. Why be too greatly concerned as to whether the Tarleton ménage can be duplicated from life? They are monstrously amusing, these folk, the words they speak are as mentally arousing as can be found in any stage dialogue of our time; and incidentally, Shaw is enabled to vent many ideas on domestic life and the education of and in the home, which are seriously held by him; a fact the farcical method of the piece should not for a moment blind us to.

But does a definite thesis emerge from all this brilliancy of epigram and thrust of whimsical argument? Hardly, in the way of dramatic concision and steady cleaving to one thing. But,

plainly enough, I think, the notion that the life-force, sadly interfered with by the silly conventions of domestic upbringing, will seek its own, is stated and illustrated in Hypatia's turning from the little Bunny, with brains and no physique, to the athletic Percival, who biologically is so much more her suitable mate. We hear Shaw again saying, as in "Man and Superman," that argue and refine as we may, Nature will act and overthrow our plans. I believe this to be after all the sufficiently centralizing theme or purpose of a play which should not so much be described as wanting a story as not choosing to make the usual dramatic use of story that is there. However such a drama may act, it is a highly enjoyable bit of literature, and when a thoughtful theatre audience is homogeneously ready for it, likely to be welcome in the repertory.

The Dark Lady of the Sonnets

Written in the same year with the foregoing, 1910, it was also produced at The Haymarket Theatre, London, on November 24, 1910, Granville Barker playing Shakspere. The subject was

eminently fitting, inasmuch as it was done on the occasion of a benefit for the proposed Shakspere National Memorial Theatre. It therefore aims to show the master dramatist as the crier-up of this project. We get a characterization of the poet as novel as it is amusing, and in agreement with Shaw's well-known critical remarks about the elder playwright. It is a study of the literary type which recognizes alike its weakness and strength; we observe the note-book method of getting good lines and valuable hints from wayfaring folk the bard may meet; the putting of letters before life; the quick susceptibility of the artist to the call of sex; the bold matching of his power as a king of words against Elizabeth as queen of men; and underneath all the badinage, an earnest desire to make the sovereign realize the educational value and significance of the playhouse. To declare that this is taking unwarrantable liberty with the stock ideas of the poet is nonsense; what do we really know of this Elizabethan Englishman? The imputed qualities bring us nearer to the man, which is enough. The scene shows the poet keeping an appointment by night with the dark

lady on a terrace at Whitehall, and meeting the Queen instead, with whom he boldly talks.

The language of the period is cleverly caught, and there is special piquancy in the thoroughly modern view couched in such words as these: "For this writing of plays is a great matter, forming as it does the minds and affections of men in such sort that whatsoever they see done in show on the stage, they will presently be doing in earnest in the world, which is but a larger stage."

The scenic effectiveness and the crisp handling of the conclusion add much to the general acting value of this excellent example of Shaw's lighter manner. It may without hesitation be set down among his successes.

Fanny's First Play

At a time when it was beginning to be said that Shaw had lost his vogue, this drama reinstated the dramatist in the favor of average playgoers. Moreover, he proved his power to interest the light-minded public by the intrinsic appeal of his work rather than by the at-

traction of his name, for this play, written in 1910-11, appeared anonymously at The Criterion Theatre, London, April 18, 1911, and ran for nearly a year, when it was transferred to The Little Theatre, then to The Kingsway, for a further run; and on being given at The Comedy Theatre, New York, September 16, 1912, held the stage there for a season. In the face of these facts, it would seem untenable to argue that Shaw has become less effective as dramatist as he has matured as thinker. His most popular drama did not have the advantage of his reputation to start it; and this play is also one of his latest. It hits nearer the truth to say that while by no means all of Shaw's plays succeed in the popular sense (who is the dramatist able to make such a boast?), yet at any period of his career he is capable of a stage success; his more serious thinking, if it can be called such, has not dulled his cleverness, has indeed but lent body to increased expertness. The external history of his dramatic development is all against the assumption that like Tolstoy, for example, ethics and intellect have injured art. In fact, again and again, Shaw has turned from some serious

and strenuous dramatic debate to furnish the contemporary stage with capital light entertainment: as in the play under consideration, or the later "Androcles and the Lion."

Certainly "Fanny's First Play" is not one of the author's most important, most intellectual dramas, but it does not fail to offer an underlying satirico-social idea and the stimulation to the brain that is derived from an examination of modern theories.

To make the thing more arresting and original, there is an induction and epilogue, after the elder fashion; a young girl is to have her piece performed and we are allowed to witness the private showing; and afterwards to hear the critical comment upon it; leading critics, Walkley, Archer, and others, appear on the stage and discuss the play's merits, which affords the author a chance to poke fun at critical vagaries, and contains the suggestion that as there is no agreement, the principle of *non disputandum* holding here as elsewhere, there can be nothing authoritative or final in such judgments.

The story itself veils a satiric attack on smug, middle-class Philistine morality. Partners in

business whose families are in close friendship have respectively a son and daughter whom they intend to make a match of it. But both disappear, go off on a lark, escape from their cell like the monk of Siberia. Margaret, the girl (played in London by Lillah McCarthy), fired with an innocent desire to see life, visits a Salvation Army hall, goes to the promenade of a theatre, and then to a dance, and falls in with a young Frenchman who steers her around to see the sights. Their larkishness lands her in jail. Bobby, the son, associates himself with an insouciant young female of the name of Dora, and her influence lands him in prison, too. The fun consists in seeing them come home to shock their families; and to hear them confess to each other, each supposing the fault to have been exclusive. When they discover they do not love, they very happily pair off, Margaret with the stately butler whom she secretly admires and who turns out to be a duke; and Bobby with "darling Dora," with whom he finds himself perfectly congenial. Again, it would appear, the life-force disturbing human plans! Regarded as fact, a realistic treatment of life, this play obviously runs into

extravaganza, which no doubt is one reason for its success: the two marriages, for instance, are improbable, if not impossible. But as usual, the underlying seriousness is to be found in the study of middle-class ideas of propriety, the failure to realize what the younger generation are and need. Both Bobby and Margaret suffer from suppressed natural instincts. Their comparatively innocent and harmless night-off would in real life result, the author would say to us, in tragic happenings. In other words, here is drama to be enjoyed for the sheer fun of the thing, yet which observes the Shavian principle in that it is, unobtrusively in this case, a drama of idea.

The characterization is full of flavor and carried through with an unflagging zest: the religious Mrs. Knox, the self-satisfied, placid Mrs. Gibney; the butler-earl, whose manners as the former justify his being the latter; the Frenchman, humorously introduced for the sake of offering an outside coign of vantage from which to comment upon this group of Britishers; Dora, with her wayward charm and the good that is in her in the way of affection, and honest comradeship; the fathers of the family, too,

alike in the hidebound respectability which is their fetish; to say nothing of the principals themselves, especially Margaret, whom you feel to be an excellent example of the type of young person who in this milieu is likely to be misunderstood. It is all sound psychology. That is Shaw's way: solid truth about human beings within a more or less fanciful framework of story. The framework is to catch gulls withal; the character drawing is for the honorable minority. He elects as his business the inner truth of psychology instead of the outer truth of plot.

Androcles and the Lion

The year 1912 seems to have been one of unusual literary activity with Mr. Shaw, for three plays are dated from it in the latest volume to appear in the American edition of his works. The first in order is "Androcles and the Lion," which was translated into German by the Viennese journalist, Siegfried Trebitsch, played in Berlin before it was in English, and produced in London by Granville Barker and Lillah McCarthy,

at The St. James Theatre, September 1, 1913, and in America by Mr. Barker, at Wallack's, on January 22, 1915. It has already proved itself to be one of the genuinely effective Shaw dramas in the theatre. This is probably because, while not without many of the author's more serious earmarks in the way of satiric idea and scenic investiture, it is or has the effect of being a story play, to be enjoyed by the majority of theatre-goers in whatever country. Its novelty of form and subject-matter also conduces to this result. In the Preface to the printed play, one of Shaw's most extended and carefully wrought argumentative brochures, and sufficiently daring to arouse attention and contention, the writer shows more plainly than did his drama (a common thing with him, and stamping him as so much the better playwright) how much there is behind the piece in his thought. The essay of well over a hundred close-packed pages sets forth Shaw's thesis that no modern nation has as yet accepted and put into practice the social doctrines of Jesus, which, he believes, would, if accepted, give happier results than have been attained from any other theory of society and state. It is a de-

fense of the teachings of the founder of Christianity from a quarter least to be expected by those who think of the writer as a destructive force flaring out against conventional religion. I doubt if a piece of writing ever came from Mr. Shaw's pen to surpass this Preface and the little postscript at the play's end, in sheer literary force; it is extraordinary for crisp concision and a kind of inevitability of felicitous phrasing. The clinch of such a sentence as this, coming in its cumulative place after what goes before, cannot fail to be noted by any one sensitive to the uses of English: "From which I conclude that a popular pulpit may be as perilous to a man's soul as an imperial throne."

The author makes plain in his Preface, if it were needed to do so, that his drama, a curious mixture of fable, chronicle history, and extravaganza, is not a study of the early Christians and Roman civilization, but of the martyr type and the persecutor type as such, wherever found; these particular types being illustratively made use of. No depiction of the subject was ever more removed from bias or parti pris. Grant that Shaw gets fun out of both Christian and

Pagan, he has no purpose to ridicule either, save as all humanity is laughable, as well as pathetic, tragic, and inspiring, when viewed by a true satirist. He shows us that a Cæsar is very much what his environment makes him, for good or bad; that not all are Christians in the deeper sense who so call themselves, witness a Ferrovius, a Lavinia, and a Spintho,—of a truth, religion makes strange bedfellows,—and that the famous cruelties of Rome at this juncture were simply the regular reaction of the conventionalist to eccentric persons at large. Thus, in a drama fairly uproarious in its opportunities for amusement, there is, for those willing to look beneath the laugh, some of the cogent thinking which it is the writer's sly way to pass to us when we are off guard, along with the more obvious merriment of which he is prodigal.

"Androcles and the Lion" coruscates with palpable theatre effects of the most alluring sort. The opening scene in which by way of prologue, and embroidering the old tale, the man tames the beast, is as convulsing an example of Shaw's broad humor as can be named. The arena scenes are brilliantly of stage value; and that

in which the imperial monarch, mere man now in his terror, is chased by the lion, is even more overcoming to the risibles than the initial appearance of the brute. The characterization is as varied and salient as could be wished: a striking study in contrasts and yet brought under the common denominator of human nature. I am sorry for any one who does not see a deep pathos in the seemingly weak, henpecked husband of the shrewish Megaera, who, by the way, is packed full of irradiating meanings upon family life and its relations. Androcles, with his gentle sweetness, his rather dazed desire for the use of loving-kindness, is, seen to the center of him, a very touching portraiture, and Shaw at his best. The final exit of Tommy the lion and his friend, a man whose loving-kindness is not arbitrarily limited by the line between brute and human, contains the lines spoken by Androcles:

> "Whilst we stand together, no cage for you; no slavery for me."

It is an idealist reminding us that liberty is one, and if it be a principle worth applying, it cannot be for sporadic application.

A plot in the strict sense may be denied to this favorable specimen of the author's maturer art. Androcles, along with a number of Christian martyrs, is in the Roman arena awaiting his turn to be torn to pieces by wild beasts. He is saved by the lion from whose foot he has extracted the thorn. Such complications as arise are due to the different ways in which the Christians take their fate, the interactions of prisoners and captors, and, above all, to the disturbing presence of the king of beasts. There is an excellent climax in the rescue of Androcles by his supposed destroyer, suddenly changed to friend for a reason cannily understood by the theatre audience, after the prologue's preparation, but highly mystifying to the persons of the play,—a truly right handling of story for theatre purposes. The story is quite sufficient for the style of play in which it is used, and the leisurely movement and full pausing for individual effects of scene and character exposition are deliberately adopted by the playwright, rather than a tenser handling of material in a drama of skilful tangle and emphasis upon suspense. Again we get thoughtful burlesque, extravaganza, farce, or all of them,

as you will. Farce, it can hardly be called, when so much care and serious intention are put into character portrayal.

The form into which "Androcles and the Lion" is thrown offers still another example of Shaw's free hand in moulding his material. The prologue is followed by two acts only, the acting time as a result falling under the conventional demands of a full evening's entertainment, so that a forepiece is properly given with it. But this did not prevent the dramatist from saying all he had to say within more prescribed limits and stopping when he was through,—one of the eternal difficulties of literature!

Overruled

This one-act piece was written in 1912, and produced at The Duke of York's Theatre, in London, October 14, of that year, in a triple bill in which the other two plays were contributed by Sir James Barrie and Sir Arthur Pinero. Shaw describes it as "a comedy of manners," also as "a clinical study." Often in his plays there is the suggestion that existent social views reflect

back upon married folk and make trouble. Here he exhibits a complication arising from such pseudo-ideals, treating the situation in a vein of light satire. The result is a bit of enjoyable fooling, though by no means the writer at his best. The note struck is that of "The Philanderer," without that play's more serious tone and elaborate handling.

Two married pairs are shown, and the wife in each case talks over her situation with the husband of the other woman. None of the four is a philanderer in the sense that any one of them is willing to disturb the peace of a friend's household. Yet none of them is true to individual duty in the married bond. That is, they respect the convention, but do not respect the personal faith in the home which is the basis of right doing. One couple says: "I like this, though I oughtn't." In contrast, the second couple says: "I *want* to like this, but I don't, particularly."

By interesting character relief and contrast and through witty, keen dialogue, Shaw satirizes the conventional view of such a social contretemps. He shows us plainly his conviction that the usual assumptions in the premises are untrue,

because they do not square with the facts about human nature. The two men, and the two women as well, are constantly saying what they consider proper, according to the social opinion that prevails, while they are steadily acting otherwise; whether or not they obey the convention, the point Shaw makes is, that they set it up as right to obey. The treatment is in perfect harmony with the author's general view: accept human nature for what it is, in planning and conducting the marriage system, which, being human, is necessarily imperfect; do not pretend that humanity is something other than it is. "I like any one to love me," says one of the women. "Of course, we all do. Can't we admit that we're human, and have done with it?" says Mrs. Juno.

"Marriage is all very well, but it isn't romance," remarks Juno; which I take to be Shaw whimsically suggesting that the mistake is to think romance is better. The humor of the situation, where each man goes out to dinner with the other's wife, depends upon this cheerful, open-eyed acceptance of human nature: the frank liking by criss-cross, with the removal of surreptitious guilt, deceit, and the like; so that it be-

comes simply a frank, open pleasure in the society of human beings other than within the home; flirting ceases, the relation is innocently sexual, but not animal. The flaw here, as elsewhere with Shaw, is to be found in the notion that so highly inflammable material as human beings would in all cases escape the flames of illicit love. With Shaw, it seems an attitude of mind, this theory, rather than a workable thing; but as theory, admirable, with a great deal of truth in it.

The title of the play may be taken in the technical legal sense: "Overruled, to set aside the authority of a decision as a precedent, by maintaining a different doctrine in a later case."

Pygmalion

Like "Androcles and the Lion," this play was first done in Germany, the translation also by Herr Trebitsch, being produced at the Lessing Theater, Berlin, in November, 1913. Sir Herbert Tree produced it at Her Majesty's Theatre, in London, April 18, 1914, and it was also first done in New York in German in the sea-

son of 1913-14, and in the same season by Mrs. Patrick Campbell, October 12, at The Park Theatre.

Like "Fanny's First Play," it was a reassurance that Shaw in his prime could produce drama of practical stage appeal and story interest. Its popularity in several lands has been decided. The theme in itself, the general social elevation secured to a woman of the people by her careful training in speech, under the influence of a philologist, whose personal power over her is of a kind to suggest love, is not so searching or universal as many of the other plays. Indeed, to some the idea may appear to be far-fetched. The thing to recognize, however, is that a first-rate acting drama is the result, the whimsical motive proving full of possibilities in the hands of Shaw; and moreover, the additional fact that the piece does not fail to give us the usual overtones: shrewd, penetrating observations upon society, and the men and women who make it up, in their sex meanings, together with sundry scattering reflections which are immediately caught as familiar and representative. At the center is the satire directed against the pre-

tensions and conventions of class. The speech of Eliza, the flower girl, at first objectionably like her kind and later that of a fine lady, becomes in Shaw's hands a symbol of all the external, acquired touchstones by which people assume superiority and grade social distinction. The dramatist, with his keenly observant eye, sees that it is in the main some superficial acquisition,—dress, language, deportment, habit of life,—that gives a person the social place proudly taken as a right; and he laughs at this, as democrat and socialist, much as Molière laughed at this or that one of the learned professions.

Regarded as story, the interest heads up in the relation of Eliza to the professor who has made her socially, by his ingenious instruction in the proper use of the mother tongue. The situation is decidedly piquant; one feels that she is greatly interested in him, influenced by him, and there is a natural question in one's mind: will they marry? Somewhat tantalizingly Shaw writes a last scene leaving the query in mid-air; the issue is ambiguous, for while the action implies that Eliza will defiantly go to work for Higgins's rival, and she snaps her fingers at her former mas-

ter, yet there is that in the two characters, and in the girl's very tempestuousness of repudiation, which breeds the suspicion that at bottom Higgins is the man she wants, and, after the fashion of Ann's grab game, will get. Characteristically, the author adds to this scene in the printed play an explanation from which we learn that this deduction is incorrect; that she marries Freddy, the young gentleman who, in the crass idiom of today, fell for her from the first. And she makes this decision, the author goes on to tell us, not that she did not care for the professor, but because she instinctively felt that he would not make a good husband, was not of the Benedick brand, because—a reason truly Shavian in its unexpectedness—she had a rival in Higgins's mother, to whom this middle-aged, forceful, and woman-attracting bachelor was so devoted. The pages wherein this theory is propounded and the anxious auditor of the play set right, will add much to the pleasure from the play, and are rich in social suggestion.

In this drama, Shaw reverts to the old-fashioned five-act form which we have come to expect in modern dramaturgy only in plays of romantic

and historical character, where the model would traditionally favor it. To give a modern realistic comedy such form seems almost like bravado. Probably the best reason to give is that the drama worked out that way when it was plotted and scene-divided. It is really a four-act play with a prologue: for such act one, which shows the flower girl in her estate before the metamorphosis under Higgins began, can be seen to be. In this opening act, the main characters, especially Higgins and the flower girl, are limned, and then act second starts the phonetical reform, act third shows it triumphant, act fourth presents the climax of Eliza's reaction and revolt from the cold-hearted experiment which has lifted her to the duchess height, only to let her fall back into the street; leaving a final act of high tension to clear up the relations of the two—and without doing it! Both to the lover of story for story's sake and the student of human nature, the final situation of these two strangely contrasted folk offers fascinating queries: *will* they, *should* they, *could* they? And the author tantalizes us with a curtain which leaves an interrogation mark. The fourth act

scene of the turn of Eliza upon the man whose power she feels yet resents, is very fine drama indeed. Had Shaw been a "romantic," he would, of course, have closed the affair by throwing the two into each other's arms. But not with so consistent an enemy of the customary treatment of love. Higgins is a Frankenstein who, to his astonishment, finds that his own creation, the street girl, is likely to turn and rend him. In his scientific interest in her as a phonetic problem, and his intellectual use of her to prove that duchesses can be easily manufactured (ignoring human interest), he has quite overlooked the little matter of Eliza's having a soul. With all the differences of subject, treatment, setting, and tone, there is a reminder in this situation of Ibsen's "When We Dead Awaken," with the sculptor also refusing to treat his model as a human being and respond to her love. What a fantastic proposition for a realist's play! To make a duchess in six months by reforming the speech and deportment of a malleable girl of the people, with good looks and natural intelligence! But given the premises, how much of shrewdest social wisdom is in it, what a caustic picture of hu-

man nature, enlivened by humor and penetrating often to the very center of the truth.

Eliza is a remarkable creation, not needing a Mrs. Patrick Campbell to show it, since one gets her clearly in the reading. The two men of science, Higgins and Pickering, might easily overlap, but yet are perfectly distinct. Higgins himself, though in certain respects he may seem to reveal his creator hardly masked behind him, is immensely alive, and a type standing squarely on his own feet. His mother is delightful, and accounts for her son's infatuation with her. Freddy, as an amiable nobody, is a sketch, but a capital one; the Eynsford-Hills, mother and daughter, are an acute study of genteel poverty. As for Doolittle, he deserves a chapter to himself! No doubt he is farcical, or if you insist, impossible. But how could we spare his inimitable talk about the "deserving poor," the unction of his genial blackguardism? As a married man, he is immortally good fun. One goes back to Dickens for his prototype, and does not quite find it, since Doolittle is himself and no other.

In short, in this latest drama to be widely seen and read, Shaw is so enjoyably the maker of

merriment and keen social satirist as to make it temperate to say that his present estate as playwright shows him in his ripest ability.

Great Catherine

This is another of the sportive trifles in which our author rewrites history. Its date is 1913, the same year as "Pygmalion." It is frank burlesque, extravaganza that yet contains the smile of the mind. That Catherine of Russia was anything like the representation of her in this one-act piece, can never be settled, since it is exactly a person behind the public scene of traditional report who is pictured. Nor have we the interpretive benefit of the usual introduction. But it would be a mistake to consider too curiously in the case of a *jeu d'esprit* which the author describes as "a harmless piece of tomfoolery." It is one of those bits of stage fun which this serious-minded writer permits himself, now and again, perhaps primarily for his own relief, and while its tendency to suggest the unconventional values and contours of historical characters is undoubtedly an element in Shaw's

purpose, it is safer criticism to center the scrutiny of this sportive piece of irresponsibility on character, scene, and situation. In no other of his plays has Shaw let himself go so far in the way of horseplay and broad, some will say, coarse comedy, with the single exception of "Passion, Poison, and Petrifaction." The thing is a veritable riot of physical knockabout, and much of its effectiveness is derived from the absurd incongruity of exhibiting personages of high importance in the sleazy déshabille of truth; it would be unpleasantly disillusioning, if we cared more for those who are depicted. Catherine, whose name comes to us as ominous, retires from Shaw's hands as an attractive woman who, like Elizabeth, cared for men; and through the drunken buffoonery of her minister, Patiomkin, emerge the battered outlines of an astute statesman, after all. And the comparison between the fact of such characters and their figureheads in history is so drawn as to produce an amusement not altogether unthoughtful.

The young English officer set bewildered in this wild Russian behind-the-scenes farrago of psychology, enables the writer to make some of

his usual hits at the British type, while plainly showing it as quite able to take care of itself in the imbroglio. "Great Catherine" may be set beside "Press Cuttings," for its ungloved, exuberant handling of great names, and its tendency to satirize the conventions of character portrayal. It makes fun of court life of the past in much the same spirit and with much the same intention shown by Mark Twain, in his "Connecticut Yankee at the Court of King Arthur." Its realism of method and perhaps in part the nature of the theme prevent it from being so marked a success as the English satire on present history, more commonly called politics. It will not, I imagine, be ranked as on a level with "Press Cuttings," nor take its place among the happiest achievements of the author in the drama of one-act form.

The Music Cure

This is another topical skit after the manner of "Press Cuttings," in one act, containing much in the way of political allusions, including the Marconi scandal. It was produced at The

Little Theatre, London, January 28, 1914, as a curtain raiser to Chesterton's "Magic," and has not been published, so that a knowledge of it, unless one were so fortunate as to have heard the piece, is based upon the newspaper reports. Thus indirectly judged, it seems to be one of the minor sketches for purposes of fooling primarily, and offering relief (to those who seek it) for all who find dramas like "Mrs. Warren's Profession" and "Man and Superman" too heroic in their demands. We get an interior scene which shows an Under-Secretary of State much exhausted by the examination of the Macaroni Committee, the Macaroni Company being one in which he has invested heavily on hearing that the Army is to go on a vegetarian diet. To help him recover, his mother has engaged a woman pianist to play to him; and the music cure, involving both piano and concertina, works so well that the lady captures the weary one, the curtain falling on the rendition as a duet of "You Made Me Love You: I Didn't Want to Do It,"—a sentiment recognizably of Shaw, since it might be the heraldic device of John Tanner. One can understand that this slight framework of fun

may contain some genuinely Shavian material, though the reviews do not favor this idea.

At the present writing, Shaw's latest drama, by name "O'Flaherty, V. C.," has been restrained by the authorities in Ireland, where it was the intention of The Abbey Theatre to produce it, on the ground that it would not be looked on with favor in the premises. The British censor has no jurisdiction in Ireland, but the objection comes from the military not civil authorities. Whether this attitude will soon be slackened or the conductor of The Abbey Theatre, Mr. Ervine, may defy the warnings and let the play be seen, is in the lap of the gods. So far, it has not been published, save for practical stage and copyright purposes; so that no examination of the drama can be made for this volume.

This, then, completes the list of the dramatic writings of Bernard Shaw, and the number, thirty plays, makes his work generous in quantity. But quantity, save as it implies a fecund mind full of matter to give the world, would not be significant, could we not add that in verve, variety, literary skill and effect, and pungent

stimulative appeal to thought, the work enchains attention, rewards study, and affords the pleasure that belongs to a genuine contribution to letters.

CHAPTER VII

THE SOCIAL THINKER

After this detailed examination of the plays in due chronologic order, we may synthesize the main points of Shaw's social teaching, his opinions with regard to men and women in society today, and the evils which prevent the free and fruitful development of the individual.

There is room for both the individualistic and socialistic ideal in his view. On the one hand, he regards it as the highest aim of the state to conserve and foster that deeply personal expression of the will to live, and the will to function, which shall result, as he believes, in the fullest expansion of every man and woman. And on the other, he conceives it as obligatory upon the state, meaning the framework of government which should exist alone for its helpfulness in the evolution of the individual, so to legislate as to assist men and women in this interacting growth and self-realization. In a word, the state exists for Man,

it has no other reason for being. But, sharply diverging from Ibsen at this point, he thinks the state is a beneficent means to this end: largely wrong, mismanaged, and in the way of progress, to be sure; but to be improved, not destroyed. Ibsen, both in his plays and in private letters, expressed scepticism with regard to the value of the state, and was for a clean sweep of removal. Shaw prefers to use the present machinery by eliminating its defects. Like Mr. H. G. Wells, he has faith in the collective mind of society, which shall work this betterment, as it gradually (the Fabian, we saw, gets his name from his tendency to make haste slowly) comes to perceive what is wrong in detail and rectifies it by improved laws. And again like Wells, he finds that the collective mind, which is the mind socialistically inclined, must get expression in the few individual minds of clear seeing and natural leadership; Wells, his own, and suchlike thinkers. The word revolutionist, in its usual alarming connotation, does not belong to him at all. To be sure, in that document known as "The Revolutionist's Handbook," one of the most brilliant pieces of polemic writing in a generation, he appears with an

anarchic flourish calculated to mislead the simple. But it is only part of Bernard Shaw's little joke with the English language. All you need to do is to read him, instead of interpreting him by headlines, and you ascertain that the "revolutionist" in his meaning is "one who desires to discard the existing social order and try another"; that the method of so doing may be as mild and peaceful as a Fabian program; and that, illustratively, a general election in England is "revolutionary." In all his writing and thinking, Shaw uses speech as all first-class literary persons do, to enforce his thought by an appeal to its radical meanings. He differs from such a master as Stevenson, for example, in that the latter gives us the root flavors of language for the pleasure that comes from this fresh, picturesque use; whereas Shaw does it primarily for the purpose of mental shock, and stimulation of the intellect into thinking.

When it comes to the particular stripe of socialism consistently to be found in Shaw's dramas, it must be understood in the first place that we see a man frankly growing before our gaze, and honest enough and large enough to make no

bones about it. The only consistency which is a jewel, as Shaw is well aware, is that which honestly believes a thing at the moment it is said; for there must be organic connection between a series of apparently disparate opinions if they be strung beadlike upon the cord of a genuine personality; beneath all seeming contradictions, is the unity of a sincere nature in its course of development. Shaw may begin with Henry George, swear by Marx later, and eventually repudiate the German and take up with the views of English economists like Sidney Webb, and yet exhibit a beautiful coördination, if we will but accept him as changing as he waxes mature, as all real thinkers do.

Recognizing, then, that we begin with this maker of many plays when he is a young thinker in the formative period of the thirties and follow him for over twenty years into the late fifties, nor refusing to him, now in his intellectual prime, the right to readjust his theories more than once in the future, it may be said that Bernard Shaw, as at present on view, believes in much more state interference with the untutored collective will, and with the vicious private will, than now

obtains. Certainly he would socialize the means of production and exchange by municipal or state control, instead of leaving it to private initiative and capital. He would have mothers pensioned by the state, for example, and doctors salaried by the city, and eugenics enforced by law, and marriage made more difficult and divorce easier by governmental action. And he would have men and women given an equal economic chance before the law, the latter being recognized as economic competitors, and wage-earners who should receive an equivalent of their wage-earning capacity when they elect the rôle of child-bearing and child-rearing. He would have the state reach out its long arm and punitively seize the smug, respectable citizenry which attends church regularly but derives an income from insanitary slums and houses of ill repute of various kinds.

All this, it will be observed, is state interference with what is so proudly called, especially in political campaigns, "the inalienable right of the individual." It is a view we Americans are somewhat shy of, although we adopt it with delightful inconsistency here and there in our

municipally conducted lighting plants, or public libraries, or by whatever piece of machinery we see fit to handle some great utility in the interests of the public and without private gain as an object. This is Shaw's socialism as we find it scattered through his plays and applicable to this or that aspect of social thought, which aims in general to improve the present conditions of living and bring into closer harmony the members of the social organism. He has declared that "the only fundamental socialism is the socialization of the selective breeding of man; in other terms, of human evolution. We must eliminate the Yahoo, or his vote will wreck the commonwealth." Then, the inequitable massing of wealth in private hands, and the masked slavery that is called free labor under present conditions, would automatically be taken care of. The policy of Fabianism, in his own description, is one that is "peaceful, constitutional, moral, economical," and needing nothing "for its bloodless and benevolent realization but the approval of the English people."

In this conception of the function of the state, Shaw sees the family as necessarily central and

its integrity essential to the best results. He is anything but destructive in his treatment of the home as the natural integer of the state; his conclusions here are as conservative as those of a typical Mid-Victorian; only he waxes iconoclastic when he considers the methods whereby the family may be better constituted and regulated. A short cut to his view, as we saw, may be found in reading the Preface to "Getting Married," supplemented, naturally, by the play itself! All the half-baked talk as to the Shavian philosophy being subversive of the family and state is either intentionally misrepresentative or blandly ignorant of his teaching, or, once again, using his convenient phrase, "mentally overtaxed" in the attempt to interpret it. Nothing is clearer than his position here. He certainly regards the home, as at present constituted, as ill-managed in the interests of the child,—and the school likewise; his underlying objection to both being the repressive principle which maims and inhibits the free personal reaction which alone is life. Even as he believes in the selective principle of eugenics to get the child born, so he believes in assisting the child in its period of growth to self-realization.

The introduction to "Misalliance," one of the most elaborate he ever penned, gives us a clear idea of his notions on the complex and vastly misunderstood relations of parents and children.

Shaw's championship of women consists in his open-eyed recognition that they must be an organic part of the rightly conducted state, sharing alike its duties and privileges, and not in the present anomalous position with regard to its government. He is not a suffragist, as a fixed attitude, because he is so much more, and sees so plainly that the ballot is but an incidental step, though an important one, to full economic participation in social life before the law. In this respect, he closely affiliates with Ibsen, who, it will be remembered, when asked for an express indorsement of their movement by a Suffragist club, declined a definite tying up to what in his view was an incident in a larger and longer struggle, a means to an end. But unquestionably, part of the Shavian social vision takes in that coming type of woman who is glimpsed as a glorified companion of man, joint worker with man towards superman by means of the life-

force, instead of the pretty-doll type illustrated by Nora.

Since Shaw believes that the only thing the matter with the poor is poverty, he naturally deduces that the socialization of production and exchange would tend to make poor persons the sporadic exception rather than a defined class; all the misery, want, crime, and devastation wrought by the numerousness of those who lack the means of livelihood being thus mitigated, and, logically, in the end removed. But not only is poverty the matter with the poor; uselessness is the matter with the rich; meaning, that if the rich become useful, which, by the way, some of them do, there is no objection to their being rich unless that in so becoming they unfairly block the rights of others, namely, the poor. And just as truly as he cries up the worthy rich, his objection not being to money, which he lauds to the skies in certain plays, notably "Major Barbara," his attack being directed against the unfair sequestration of wealth at the expense of others: so he is perfectly open-eyed in his vindication of the poor and the blame he puts upon present social laws and conceptions for the

sorry case of the proletariat, in recognizing that derelicts and hopeless incompetents are inevitable. This class of folk is made up of those who, if made solvent today, would be insolvent tomorrow by their own inability to adjust with their environment. In his more whimsical mood of raillery, Shaw would dispose of such waste material by some drastic removal by force; more seriously, he would take care of the wastrels and wasters through some beneficial agency like pensions, and enforced work. But continually, this writer of plays who is also an earnest student of social wrongs, disclaims the power to offer the remedy. In closing a discussion of the socialization of eugenics, for example, he frankly says: "It is idle for an individual writer to carry so great a matter further in a pamphlet. A conference on the subject is the next step needed." In other words, Shaw's function is to suggest and stimulate and prod on to action. This is why he is not a philosopher in the full sense: he elects another and perhaps more useful rôle.

Bernard Shaw has one powerful ally in his views on social betterment and reform. I refer to Time. Sundry of his ideas, that concerning

eugenics, or the pensioning of motherhood, for instance, have been widely accepted in legal enactment during the twenty or more years since he first promulgated them. And looking at the socialistic ideal at its broadest and best, as the socialization of production and exchange, with no illegitimate encroachment upon private property and individual interests, there can be no question that the principle has been accepted and put into practice with increasing frequency. With regard to our municipalities, in fact, the socialistic trend has been marked. So true is this, that in a recent address the United States Commissioner of Immigration declared it was now apparent that the city of tomorrow will take over the public ownership of such utilities as the street railway and lighting plant, as a matter of course. The benefits accruing in those cases where it has been tried are too obvious not to act as object-lessons. Certain representative European cities have long since shown the way; our own cities have begun to follow. Nor can it be doubted that in a scheme of local self-government like ours, a successfully established system locally illustrating a general truth

will be sure to influence state and federal action in the end. Shaw merely suffers under the disadvantage of being a little ahead of his day; a disadvantage steadily lessened as he grows older. Broadly speaking, if we will but separate his whimsicality of mood and statement from the underlying principles of his position, we shall be able to discover him as both sane and sound in the main contention.

It is probable that the feature of Shaw's general social theory which awakens the greatest opposition and breeds misunderstanding, is his idea of sex relations, his conception of what is called love, and the results of it in the life of the family and society. This arouses more violent prejudice than any advocacy of the socialization of the means of production and distribution, for the excellent reason that it is the person who fears the expropriation of his private property, in the main, who becomes alarmed at the word, socialism; in other words, the capitalist, for the galled jade winces, naturally. But when a man cries it out from the housetops that so-called love is dust in the eyes of truth, he hits the tender spot, not of a class or a favored few, but of all

of us; we are all involved in an attack upon the sacrosanct thing around which cluster our holiest memories and beneath which germinate our deepest emotions.

But it has become evident in the examination of the specific plays, and of Shaw's handling of the English language in general, that he exhibits himself as antisympathetic not to love as a sentiment based upon mutual respect and clear-seeing, but rather to that sort of passion in which the contracting parties are viciously setting up an imaginary idol, to be inevitably smashed in the disillusionment to follow the post-nuptial awakening. As usual, in order to shock us into thinking, he gives his meaning the fillip of interest which comes from an apparently contradictory statement. The natural history of man, which it is his object, as it was Balzac's, to study and set down, is obscured by this romantic mist which the wrong use of love throws in the eyes of all concerned, and especially in those of the two persons most concerned in the transaction. The life-force can be relied upon to furnish the attraction which shall draw a man and a woman together in a way to lead to matrimony,

or to its undesirable free-love equivalent. But Shaw would ask the self-conscious reason, not opposing but coöperating with the life-force, to control the destiny of lovers, and hence of the race, by the exercise of a common sense which refuses to be fooled when the most important thing is about to happen that can happen, not only to the pair who are central but to all society of which they are an inseparable part. He is so bold as to ask man to give up the pretty legend that Cupid is blind, and to look at the facts, as he would look at them in other vital matters. This request and attitude are, of course, extremely repellent to all who cling to the Cupid tale, believing that if it be abandoned, romance will fly forever from the face of the earth. Shaw deems otherwise, and the preconception which involves the opinion on the part of a man that a woman is a goddess not to be otherwise entreated; or the opinion on the part of a woman that a man is a hero incapable of human reactions, he deems a piece of vicious traditionalism, to be robustly exorcised, root and branch. And to mitigate this somewhat austere faith, he humorously recognizes the likelihood that, for a

long time to come, the God of Love will continue to be pictured as blindfolded, and will shoot his arrows at the bull's-eye of our credulity.

Upon analysis, then, and trying to see the general drift and meaning of the social teachings or implications of Bernard Shaw, as revealed in his drama: and bringing them into harmony with his more formal and sober theories as set forth in his economic writings, one is likely to find that here is a man whose views at bottom are perfectly consistent (his views detached from his manner of presentation), and those of the progressive social thinkers in that field; the variations being such as not to invalidate the statement. One realizes that here is a popularizer of thought in a field given over to the specialist and to dryasdust investigation; a writer of plays, which means traditionally one who amuses the masses; who yet, while he frankly accepts the limitation and first of all offers entertainment in the playhouse, nevertheless has beneath this aim and result a desire to spread the news and bring the gospel to the multitude; who, by his own confession, is willing to foster the G. B. S. legend, if only, because he is supposed to be piquantly

naughty and destructively iconoclastic, he can thereby attract such general attention as to make matters like divorce, eugenics, and motherhood pensions, food for public discussion and vitally operative in the thought of the day. That somewhat of pleasure in his personal prominence and profit in the practical results of his dramatic labor may enter into this more impersonal and laudable ambition, does not in the least qualify the fact of his beneficent service. No man has been franker in disclaiming unselfish aims; Shaw would be the last person to deny his enjoyment in his prestige, and has that peculiar form of modesty which consists in vociferously crying up his own virtues; a form not alone of modesty, by the way, but of honesty as well. He is of all men most foolish who thinks that when Bernard Shaw gravely considers the question of his superiority to Shakspere, he is an egoist in the ordinary meaning of the word.

The popularizer of anything is not of necessity shallow or viciously subversive of the truth. It may happen that, in the fullness of time, criticism will have successfully sifted Shaw's essentials of meaning from his apparently irresponsible con-

tradictions and whimsicality of manner, and find him to be a stimulating social thinker, sound in substance beneath the fantastic embroidery of his speech and the criss-cross of his dialectic, tremendously earnest in intention, and doing yeoman work in making the general public aware of problems that without him, or such as he, they would certainly pass by on the other side. To have made an inert mass quiver with interest about an important social topic, instead of sleeping supine in its presence, surely this is something; one who does it has done a community service, and been, intellectually, a good citizen.

But his personal ideal goes further and is more explicit than this. Let us hear his own statement:

"The final ideal for civic life is that every man and woman should set before themselves this goal: that by the labor of their lifetime they shall pay the debt of their rearing and education, and also contribute sufficient for a handsome maintenance during their old age. And more than that, Why should not a man say: When I die, my country shall be in my debt? Any man who has any religious belief will have dreamed

the dream that it is not only possible to die with his country in his debt, but with God in his debt also."

This is a remarkable manifesto, and several things in it may be noted. First, the acceptance of the individual's duty to society; second, the acknowledgment of the idealist's dream of betterment, which connects Shaw with a radiant line from Plato to William Morris; and third, the distinct confession of faith in the linking of a religious obligation with social service; it is a service which unites the individual not with brother man alone, but with God; the aspirations are twin aspirations, help for man and harmony with God. And it would be ungenerous not to add that Shaw's personal and private life are in complete and honest accord with this faith that is in him.

It is, be it observed, a this-world religion; not the other-world religion that was earlier dominant. In this respect, Shaw is thoroughly a modern. His heaven is not a palace in the sky, but a purified planet in the solar system. God is a force among men that makes for righteousness, not the "big blue man" of the child's con-

ception. That is what he means by the cryptic epigram: "Beware of the man whose God is in the skies." If his God is not operative in his daily life here on earth, Shaw has no use for him.

He might be described not ineptly, in broad terms, as a Positivist, if one were anxious to fit a philosophic term upon him. Certainly he has the ideal of that aspect of thought; and would with George Eliot cry:

"O, may I join the choir invisible
Of those immortal dead who live again
In minds made better by their presence."

This kind of living-again is quite sufficient for Shaw, and keys him up to social service and personal salvation: the salvation he does not seek, since his way of finding his life is to lose it in that same service.

Bernard Shaw dreams forward to a socialized democracy where through selective breeding the citizenship shall be so improved as to make supermen and superwomen an attained type, not a sporadic phenemenon; where the drone shall be replaced by the worker under right conditions,

and the criminal no longer has any justification because of inequitable laws or conventions; where the truths about life and society are recognized and the highest in mankind is worshiped as that empirical deity which alone will save the worshiper; a Positivist religion which sees the divine in the human and sees God as an evolutionary conception. It is a noble dream and has been well expressed in the words put into the mouth of Father Keegan in "John Bull's Other Island": it is a beautifully mystic statement that is social-spiritual, made by one who is spiritual in his social view and social in his spirituality:

> BROADBENT. Once when I was a small kid, I dreamt I was in heaven. . . . What is it like in your dreams?
>
> KEEGAN. In my dreams it is a country where the state is the Church and the Church the people: three in one and one in three. It is a commonwealth where work is play and play is life: three in one and one in three. It is a temple in which the priest is the worshiper and the worshiper the worshiped: three in one and one in three. It is a god-

head in which all life is human and all humanity divine: three in one and one in three. It is, in short, the dream of a madman.

This is intensely autobiographic; I doubt if there be a passage in all Shaw's writings that is more so, even including the half-mocking, yet deeply pathetic word in which in the guise of the Father who is not mad, but only the mistaken idealist, he tells us that the world will not see the truth, because of the truth-bringer. And the utterance resolves itself naturally into a consideration of the poetic and philosophic elements that go to round out the full circle of his working hypothesis about life.

For Shaw's service is not all embraced in what are strictly his social views. There is another and a vastly interesting aspect of his thought and meaning which remains to be considered: his philosophical and poetic implications. These are the more important to consider in that they are the very aspects of his thought and teaching likely to be overlooked, or at least minimized in the ordinary quick and shallow estimate of the man. They represent the least obvious phase of his complex personality; yet are they of deep

significance when we come to the attempt to see him in the round, and get a realization of the relative emphasis to be put upon one who so easily lends himself to newspaper caricature. Bernard Shaw out of drawing suffers exactly as any serious man suffers in that process; and add to this the fact that he is just the sort of figure especially offering itself for misrepresentation, and that he has aided and abetted, maliciously, in the efforts to make a figurehead out of a real human being, and one sees how necessary it is to try for a proportionate picture. This most difficult part of the delineation of Shaw must now be essayed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER VIII

THE POET AND MYSTIC

In a letter in the London *Times*, incidental to his controversy with Mr. W. H. Mallock, Bernard Shaw wrote: "They regard me as a cynic when I tell them that even the cleverest man will believe anything he wishes to believe, in spite of all the facts and text-books in the world."

One might well develop an elaborate argument to the conclusion that all our vaunted use of logic and pride in clear thinking are misleading, inasmuch as beneath the ratiocinative processes there is with human beings at their best and highest of evolution a deep undertow of emotion and impulse which really floats the mind on to its apparently deductive conclusions. The remark of Arnold's that three-fourths of all self-conscious life is lived in the emotions is a profound one.

And the thought may be applied to Shaw, taking his own words out of his mouth and good-na-

turedly turning them against him. He is a vigorous thinker whose style is admirably clear and cogent as an instrument to assist him to put forth his meaning. But *au fond*, his is an impulsive and intensely emotional nature which, swept along by honest conviction, races to its goal of conclusion, and in common with all men, uses the data gathered from investigation to buttress a belief that is not so much forced upon him by analysis as immediately appealing to his intuitions,—the life-force at work in him. If one doubts that predispositions settle the subsequent deductions, even in the finest type of mind, one has only to collate the opinions upon the present war, and see how the matter of nationality inevitably settles the attitude and arguments of the thinker. Each, with his particular ethnic bias, can deduce with admirable logic results diametrically opposed to another thinker whose country happens to be on the other side of the debate. The leading minds of Europe have been on parade in this fashion, and proved conclusively that logic will never be allowed to interfere with feeling.

It is by the application of this principle, too

often overlooked, that help will be afforded the student of Shaw when, as will frequently turn out, he seems contradictory or inconsistent. He feels his way to the truth and then demonstrates it, at least to his own satisfaction, and often to yours. And it is the feeling beneath the argument that gives it warmth and fascination.

It is this truth about certain of his modes of thought and ways of expression, coupled with his tendency to bend his mental processes to the demand of his sense of right, his natural affiliations and sympathies, that must not for a moment be dropped from mind when we try to understand and relate to his general interpretation of life his fairly mystic explanation of man as spirit and the universe as an experiment of the life-force.

Indeed, the side of Shaw's personality which is hinted at in the title of this chapter, is somewhat puzzlingly in evidence when we strive to get a complete view of him and his work. It is interwoven more or less with his social teachings and yet can be seen to be separate from them. The previous remark that he is not a philosopher is by no means meant to be interpreted that a certain philosophical attitude was not plainly to be

detected in his thought; but only that a systematized and organic statement of it was not vouchsafed us. The view runs through all his thinking, and explains some of the seeming contradictions and inconsistencies in his writing. How, for instance, can it be reconciled that a thinker whose general tendency is to show himself a man of his day in his preference for scientific conceptions and methods of thought, is yet the man who boldly, and as it were, in the very teeth of science, challenges the germ theory of disease and fights against vaccination? We must make an attempt at least to show such an apparent volte-face possible if we would see him as he is; and the riddle is not solved until we take into account a part of his nature which lies deeper than intellectual processes and reminds us of his own words: "the unconscious self is the real genius. Your breathing goes wrong the moment your conscious self meddles with it." I believe it to be this subliminal energized daimon of Shaw, to borrow the Socratic name for it, which goes far to explain him,—and moreover to give him his value for the world. Here stands out in sudden, startling relief a side of his nature

which may seem oddly at variance with the Shaw who writes so clearly on municipal trading; a side that compels us, nevertheless, to see and say that he has deep-lying qualities of imagination and emotion hardly to be suspected by one who generalizes from his more customary appearance as a hard-headed social controversialist. To expect an analytic pamphleteer and find a poet mystic, is certainly something of a shock; another shock from the man whose business seems to be to eject us violently from our complacent beds of easy, settled conviction about things in general.

In so far as he seizes on the idea of superman, and then endeavors to attain to the higher type of development through the agency of the socialized state, Shaw looks to Nietzsche for certain parts of his scheme of social amelioration. But he separates from him squarely and forever in the German's teaching of the duty of the strong to override the weak and in his contempt for slave (Christian) morality. In complete contrast with this view, which is the application to human society of the stern biologic law of the survival of the fittest, Shaw with his warm

espousal of the cause of the poor, the weak, and the suffering, would help brother man in the upward path even if in so doing he held back the quick coming of Overman. Tender consideration for the derelicts and incompetents,—though they irritate him extremely, and in a whimsical mood which hides earnest purpose none the less, he excoriates them and proposes speedy extermination,—is surely his general attitude. Here we probably find a reason for his contemptuous flings at the evolutionary doctrine and at the deification of the laws of physical science as applied to human psychology and social betterment. He would with Huxley "oppose the cosmic process," wherever it interferes with the higher law of altruistic consideration of brother man. Indeed, his tenderness does not stop with the arbitrary line set up between man and so-called brute, for his vegetarianism is the outward sign of a recognition of animal rights as well, the view which Salt made so sympathetic years ago. To Shaw it is repellent to eat "the slaughtered carcasses" of his humbler brothers of the field or air. And this is a moral repellency as well as an esthetic objection. In the

same way, taking refuge in the dictates of his spiritual nature, he rejects with scorn the teachings which declare that we must arm ourselves against contagious physical trouble by inoculation or other preventives. The idealist in him resents the tyranny of the flesh implied in these scientific conceptions and beliefs, and hence he presents the odd spectacle of a thinker who in many ways seems peculiarly the product of the age of Darwin, Spencer, and Wallace, of Haeckel, Lamarck, and Nietzsche, valorously combating the very theories which are the applied logic of the scientist's faith. It is the poet, the idealist, the mystic, at war with the shrewd publicist and social student.

The same tendency in Shaw leads him to accept with warmth and preach with vigor the idea of the life-force, another Nietzschean conception which he adapts to his own purposes. What is this power as he conceives it, and what its application to man in the Shavian faith?

The life-force is a modern representation of God, not so much a Being, as a Becoming tendency in the universe, an upward striving which, working through countless æons, has brought

man far along in his toilsome journey towards Overman. And it is Shaw's idea that if the individual will but cease from conventional inhibitions and traditional negations, if he be not dominated too much by a series of sacred Don'ts, which shift with time and country and social milieu; and the man be himself, join himself to, and become a part of, the life-force, he will thus be coöperative with the great creative purpose of the scheme of things, and, as the theologian would put it, be reconciled with God. It is this view which gives its cogency to the following words of this curious mixture of materialist and mystic:

"This is the true joy of life: the being used for a purpose recognized by yourself as a mighty one. Being a force of nature, instead of a feverish, selfish little clod of ailments and grievances, complaining that the world will not devote itself to making you happy."

Bernard Shaw cries out, "Hitch yourself to the life-force," very much with the same meaning which led Emerson to cry, "Hitch your wagon to a star," save that the older thinker was for the moment thinking most of the individual, while the younger is thinking of the social aim,

the racial result. Emerson is more purely an individualist than Shaw, whose individualism is tempered by his socialism and his social yearning. The difference is not alone in the men, but in their generation.

Again and again this faith in man as able to connect himself with the celestial stream of things, crops out in Shaw's dramas. It is strong and clear as we saw in "The Showing-up of Blanco Posnet," one of his most significant works with this essential philosophy in mind. Blanco, much distressed in mind to find himself neither a straight bad man nor a good one, harangues the "boys," present in the court room:

"What's this game that upsets our game? For seems to me there's two games being played. Our game is a rotten game that makes me feel that I'm dirt and that you're all as rotten as me. T'other game may be a silly game; but it ain't rotten." And he expresses his faith in God in this fashion:

"You bet He didn't make us for nothing; and He wouldn't have made us at all if He could have done His work without us. By Gum, that must be what we're for! He'd never have made

us to be rotten drunken blackguards like me, and good-for-nothing rips like Feemy. He made me because He had a job for me. He let me run loose till the job was ready; and then I had to come along and do it, hanging or no hanging. And I tell you it didn't feel rotten: it felt bully, just bully."

And when the pseudo-religionist, Elder Daniels, gets off the usual cant: "Be of good cheer, brothers. Fight on. Seek the path," Blanco contemptuously turns upon him with, "No. No more paths. No more broad and narrow. No more good and bad. There's no good and bad; but, by Jiminy, gents, there's a rotten game and there's a great game. I played the rotten game; but the great game was played on me; and now I'm for the great game every time. Amen. Gentlemen, let us adjourn to the saloon. I stand the drinks."

Here is once more set forth picturesquely and pathetically this sense of the overruling mystic power which controls, perforce, the instincts of rough-and-ready humanity, and compels it to adopt the motto *per aspera ad astra.*

We saw in studying the two plays that, allow-

ing for the difference of setting and type, this is exactly what we get from another of Shaw's protagonists, again an American, Dick Dudgeon in "The Devil's Disciple."

Surely, no one can question that this is a mystic conception of man; it is the old theory of inspiration in a new garb of modernity; it is the Delphic oracle under another name, the Christian idea of God Immanent, and the "still, small voice" of conscience bidding the sinner do right. It does not at all change the concept to dress it out with the terms of present-day physical science; to call it the subliminal self working in us and more powerful than any self-conscious reasoning process. And Shaw is a hearty believer (in the religious sense) in this wonderful power that transcends man and gives him his deepest significance. This, it may be clearly seen, is a metaphysical notion, pure and simple, a fine one, and one that appeals to that type of modern mind, which, while accepting scientific conceptions, yet is by nature religious, and needs for its comfort and best expression an aim and an authority beyond the domain of physical tests and proofs. This faith in the supercon-

science, or the subliminal operation of the Ego, is implicit in much modern thinking. We get it in Bergson when he says: "we wish to know the reason why we have made up our mind, and we find that we have decided without any reason, and perhaps against every reason. But, in certain cases, that is the best reason."

Shaw finds his "reason" in this evolutional Higher Will, as we might call it, of man. He believes in the will to live of Schopenhauer, the will to power of Nietzsche, and the Wish of Freud; his philosophy, like theirs, is a wilful one. But he adds an altruistic aspiration in the service of others which is absent from their teaching, and thus gets the lift into all his work which is always in the thinking of the sincere idealist.

It is only through man that this will-to-aspire can get itself into action and just here is man's significance, justification, and glory. And man's sense of thus being pricked on, so that the noble in him must be ever uneasy unless he is coöperating with the life-force in this fashion, is the everlasting gadfly that in the soul of man stings him into worthy action. In "Man and Superman,"

which is of all the plays that which contains the heart of his doctrine, he makes Don Juan say: "I tell you that as long as I can conceive something better than myself, I cannot be easy unless I am striving to bring it into existence or clearing the way for it. That is the law of my life. That is the working within me of Life's incessant aspiration to higher organization, wider, deeper, intenser self-consciousness and clearer self-understanding." This need puzzled poor Blanco, but he accepted its prompting, nevertheless, without any hesitation. His "By gum, that must be what we're for," is Shaw crystallized and a supreme affirmation of faith. It contains the whole Shavian working hypothesis of life.

But this individual connecting himself with the life-force might be mistaken for a sort of fatalism; the individual becoming an automaton pushed on to this mystic end by a power quite outside his own volition. Such would be a misrepresentation of Shaw's full meaning. To join the life-force is to be free: free to exercise your long cramped unused spiritual muscles. Thus, Margaret in "Fanny's First Play," after her escapade in the dance hall, has a talk with her

mother, in which she says: "I shall never speak in the old way again. I've been set free from this silly little hole of a house and all its pretenses. I know now that I am stronger than you and Papa. I haven't found that happiness of yours that is within yourself; but I've found strength. For good or evil, I am set free; and none of the things that used to hold me can hold me now." And again she remarks to her sufficiently horrified parent: "I was set free for evil as well as for good," meaning that the price of strength is freedom, which, of course, involves choice, and therefore evil as something to whet one's strength upon.

Extremely interesting, too, when we are endeavoring to come to close grip with this subtlest aspect of Shaw's belief and teaching, are the highly mystic words put into the mouth of the Mayoress in "Getting Married"; words so startlingly different from her usual self-controlled utterance that the easy thing to do is to assume that she is represented as having a "control" in the spiritualistic parlance, and so is purely passive in the matter. But one who recognizes the general seriousness of the writer

must perforce find significance in these impassioned sentences, in which there appears to be a statement of the spiritual relations of man and woman as mystically poetic as if they came from a Swedenborg rather than a Bernard Shaw. Mrs. George has a right to vatic words, because, as she puts it, "I've been myself. I've not been afraid of myself. And at last I have escaped from myself, and am become a voice for them that are afraid to speak, and a cry for the hearts that break in silence." And then she tells the bishop of a love which he seems to have inspired in her, a love that is to the earth loves as the light of some solar luminary to so many candle dips:

"When you loved me I gave you the whole sun and stars to play with. I gave you eternity in the single moment, strength of the mountains in one clasp of your arms, and the volume of all the seas in one impulse of your soul. A moment only; but was it not enough? Were you not paid then for all the rest of your struggle on earth? Must I mend your clothes and sweep your floors as well? Was it not enough? I paid the price without bargaining; I bore the

children without flinching; was that a reason for heaping fresh burdens on me? I carried the child in my arms; must I carry the father too? When I opened the gates of paradise, were you blind? Was it nothing to you? When all the stars sang in your ears and all the winds swept you into the heart of heaven, were you deaf? Were you dull? Was I no more to you than a bone to a dog? Was it not enough? We spent eternity together; and you ask me for a little lifetime more. We possessed all the universe together; and you ask me to give you my scanty wages as well. I have given you the greatest of all things; and you ask me to give you little things. I gave you my own soul: you ask me for my body as a plaything. Was it not enough? Was it not enough?"

Enigmatic? If you will. But, of a verity, splendidly, soaringly spiritual, and surcharged with mystic implications. It is as if this mundane Mrs. George of the play wished to remind us, while the author through her also told us, that the highest conception of human Love, a thing so bandied about and cheapened and made common and gross and of the earth earthy,

was in essence a supernal sentiment; that in heaven they neither marry nor are given in marriage, their amity being like that of the angels.

And again, in "Cæsar and Cleopatra," when the greatest captain of Time, alone (as he thinks) in the moon-blanched Egyptian desert, whispers to the Sphinx the inner secrets of his personality, we seem to get in him, as an impressive mouthpiece, the thinker's conviction that there is another life than that of high noon, of ratiocination and of commonsense; and that the solution of both personality and life, since all men live in their dreams, is here:

"Hail, Sphinx: salutation from Julius Cæsar! I have wandered in many lands seeking the lost regions from which my birth into this world exiled me, and the company of creatures such as myself. I have found flocks and pastures, men and cities, but no other Cæsar, no air native to me, no man kindred to me, none who can do my day's deed, and think my night's thought. In the little world yonder, Sphinx, my place is as high as yours in this great desert; only I wander, and you sit still; I conquer, and you endure;

I work and wonder, you watch and wait; I look up and am dazzled, look down and am darkened, look round and am puzzled, whilst your eyes never turn from looking out on the world—to the lost region—the home from which we strayed. Sphinx, you and I, strangers to the race of men, are no strangers to one another; have I not been conscious of you and of this place since I was born? Rome is a madman's dream; this is my reality. These starry lamps of yours I have seen from afar in Gaul, in Britain, in Spain, in Thessaly, signaling great secrets to some eternal sentinel below, whose post I never could find. And here at last is their sentinel,—an image of the constant and immortal part of my life, silent, full of thoughts, alone in the silver desert. Sphinx, Sphinx: I have climbed mountains at night to hear in the distance the stealthy footfall of the winds that chase your sands in forbidden play—our invisible children, O Sphinx, laughing in whispers. My way hither was the way of destiny; for I am he of whose genius you are the symbol: part brute, part woman, and part god,—nothing of the man in me at all. Have I read your riddle, Sphinx?"

Incidentally, it may be remarked that this is a superb burst of poetry, a passage that our time will not willingly let die out of the swelling diapason of its imaginative expression. But it is also fascinating for the philosophy it contains. I, for one, sincerely believe that Shaw is saying here what Emerson says in his great essay on love; he directs our attention to it as a divine principle far above and beyond our petty attempt to catch it in man-made devices called marriage; a principle which each pair of lovers seizes fleetingly, but then, as Browning has it,

"*Then the good minute goes;*"

a principle and a passion by which the whole creation moves, in which it has its being; Nature's way, so Emerson points out, of leading lovers through the illusion that it is an end in itself, on to that realization which culminates in the recognition of it as cosmic, eternal, not of this world, but of all the worlds that be. And for Shaw, the way whereby this may be seized by the individual is to see in himself a reflection of God in will and power (when we join the life

force, the *élan vital* of Bergson) and then work with all one's might for the social bettering of men and women.

There is a touch of this same mystic poetry in the language of Marchbanks in "Candida," and his final rejection of the Morell ménage because he sees that his destiny demands something better and beyond, he having

"The desire of the moth for the star,
Of the night for the morrow,
The devotion to something afar
From the sphere of our sorrow."

That is what Shaw, like the true idealist he is in this recurrent mood, must be after; the dream that is behind the reality, and always more desirable. This is the secret of Marchbanks that has so puzzled the critics, as was noted in the analysis of "Candida." An American went direct to the author himself in search of an explanation of a rather enigmatical passage; which had already been whimsically replied to by Mr. Shaw, as one can see by consulting Dr. Henderson's biography. But this time, instead of hid-

ing behind his mask of levity, the writer gave an answer which so far has not I believe been given other publicity than its original appearance in a western college paper, and is well worth quotation here:

Adelphi Terrace,
London, W. C.,
6 January, 1900.

Dear Sir:

In Candida the poet begins by pursuing happiness with a beloved woman as the object of his life. When at last, under the stress of a most moving situation, she paints for him a convincing picture of what that happiness is, he sees at once that such happiness could never fulfil his destiny. "I no longer desire happiness—life is nobler than that. Out, then, into the night with me." That is, out of this stuffy little nest of happiness and sentiment into the grandeur, the majesty, the holiness that night means to me, the poet. Candida and Morell do not understand this. Neither did you, eh?

G. Bernard Shaw.

The correspondence here with certain words of Cæsar in the passage quoted, will not escape the

judicious. And surely the idealist is the same as in the other excerpts.

And for a final reference: this mystic note, this appeal to a test that is not of the workaday world, sounds through the words of the weak and erring artist, Dubedat, when he comes to die: the scene in "The Doctor's Dilemma," where this takes place being almost if not quite the most remarkable single scene in all Shaw's plays:

"I know that in an accidental sort of way, struggling through the unreal part of life, I haven't always been able to live up to my ideal. But in my own real world I have never done anything wrong, never denied my faith, never been untrue to myself. I've been threatened and blackmailed and insulted and starved. But, I've played the game. I've fought the good fight. And now it's all over there's an indescribable peace. I believe in Michael Angelo, Velasquez, and Rembrandt; in the might of design, the mystery of color, the redemption of all things by Beauty everlasting, and the message of art that has made these hands blessed. Amen. Amen."

I should suppose that no member of the great confederated band of artists could find it easy to

get through this scene dry-eyed. And it is of a piece with the other passages collated for the purpose of producing a clear, culminative effect upon the reader; the effect of seeing a side of Shaw easily overlooked perhaps, but of cardinal importance in our view of him. With regard to space occupied, this phase may seem minor, it may be granted: but with regard to his true orientation, I consider it to be central and illuminating to the extreme circumference of his thought.

There is one rather obvious defect in this conception of the working of human psychology. It assumes too much of poor average human nature. It would work better if all society were made up of members so far along the path of evolution in self-restraint, noble desire, and normal reaction to the right stimuli as is the propounder of the philosophy, Bernard Shaw. It is, in other words, a counsel of perfection which is for overmen rather than for the usual mundane middle-class English folk who, after all, are the people to put it into practice, if it is to be more than a paper theory. As a way to attain Overman, it is not valid because it assumes Overman

at the start. Shaw and those like him may be safe to let themselves go, to connect themselves with the life-force, to let themselves be carried on and up by a sort of Dionysiac frenzy, a noble Berserker rage. The trouble in following one's subliminal self, so the average person might plaintively retort (that is, one's impulses and emotional dictations), is that they are quite likely to land one in jail.

Yet Shaw can neatly turn upon his objectors and remark that while it is true enough the average man will not respond in the most satisfactory manner when he is asked to be himself in the self-willed way, the need to ask him to try it is illustrated by his very lack of its proper use. We must make a beginning, and let the principle be illustrated by the few natural leaders in order that gradually, O, very gradually, men in general may be taught to act with free, strong volition and be their best selves, not be crushed by the hold-backs of caution and the timid negations of conventions; thus exercising that trained Will which alone can breed real character in place of the duplication of flabby invertebrates. As a principle, then, this new hitching one's wagon to

a star or merging in the mystic life-force, has a great deal in its favor.

That it is a genuinely high and beautiful conception of life and of duty is beyond all question. If the idea were a piece of mistaken idealism on this thinker's part, it would remain a creed to respect and admire. If the dream could never be made flesh, it would still be a dream to arouse the imagination and awake the sympathies, and comfort the heart. I, for one, am not inclined to turn cynic as to its legitimacy; especially as it is firm-based upon an indisputable truth about Man: that his emotions furnish the dynamo back of all his most typical acts and deepest reactions.

Some of us, therefore, so far from objecting to this Shaw of the mystic dream, as an unexpected and at first perhaps rather disturbing deuteragonist to the protagonist of the Shaw who talks of municipal trading and of eugenics, and whose deepest concern seems to be an equitable adjustment of the rates, welcome the poet dreamer who catches a vision of the State Beautiful, and believes in his soul that he is on the side of the angels, although he no longer calls them angels but Superfolk; whose heaven is

earth made just, and clean and honest, and lovely. Respect and liking go out naturally, instinctively, to a thinker with this faith, and with the courage of his convictions; whose work and words really tally, whose life might be called austerely pure, were it not that it is tempered with a smile, now kindly, now satiric, and humanized by a Celtic disposition to engage in a fair fight: a fight of ringing blows, and no quarter; a fight where, the affair once settled, the antagonists, wiping the sweat from their brows, shake hands and mutually admire each other's good qualities. It is noteworthy in all Shaw's battles that he seems to hate the sin rather than the sinner, and always produces the effect of a man ready and willing to resume fraternal relations, when the shindy is over. But while the encounter is on, beware! No man can hit harder or more viciously, no man is less likely to spare his opponent. I fancy that all good argufiers have said in their hearts: from such a debater, good Lord, deliver us!

And so we begin with a contentious publicist and end with a literary artist and poet: which is only, after all, walking all the way round the

circumference of a complex modern personality. We begin by thinking of him as a fantastic fellow, and end with an impression of underlying good sense; agreeing with the author's own estimate of himself, set down with his habitual frankness: "It is the sensible schemes unfortunately that are hopeless in England. Therefore I have great hopes that my own views, though fundamentally sensible, can be made to appear fantastic enough to have a chance." What of contradiction and paradox may be there, should not obscure for us the main fact that the character is consistently one: rock-founded, steadily orientated, and impressive in itself and because it represents so much of our Time, which in itself in its turn is also complex, paradoxical, and baffling; yet, again like Shaw, intensely interesting for those very reasons!

CHAPTER IX

THE THEATRE CRAFTSMAN

Stripped of much nonsense which has come to be its connotation during the development of critical nomenclature, the word technic, after all, means a very simple thing. It refers to the most workmanlike way of doing that which in literature has for its object the imparting of pleasure. In the fine arts, whose aim it is to please, technic is that manner of performing the task which results in the greatest content of satisfaction in the recipient. And perhaps it is not fundamental but arbitrary to confine the process to non-utilitarian labors. It may be that the bootblack, as he polishes your boots, possesses technic in so far as he takes pleasure in and gives you pleasure from the perfect polish he lovingly bestows. An artistic desire issuing in a beautiful result, why is that not always an illustration of true technic, albeit the thing done is practical, utilitarian, not associated with what are

called the arts? The utilitarian nature of the work should not blind us to the artistic instinct which is involved.

Be this as it may, a man has technic when he has learned to conserve his artistic interests by doing a given job in the most economical way for him and the most pleasurable to the art patron. Bernard Shaw has written some thirty dramas and has made himself famous in so doing. Many of his plays are solid theatre successes, not merely plays that appeal to the select. The box office has been so often his friend that he is a moderately rich man from his dramatic work; to be respected, therefore, by a practical, commercial Broadway manager, as a playwright whose wares have market value. And his plays in general, whether commercially effective or not, are taken seriously by the critics and enlightened public followers of the theatre in many lands. He has, then, been successful both in the critical and practical sense of the word.

He began by violently disturbing the preconceived notions of what a play is and how it should be written. Indeed, he may be described broadly as a professional overthrower of con-

ventions; he comes not to bring peace but a sword. As to the drama, having a new thing to say, he invented a way to say it in order to say it effectively, or at all. At first, the novelty of the new thing, in manner and matter, made it unacceptable; later, it became an element in Shaw's success. The critics were forced to do what under compulsion they have always done, given time enough: revise the assumed "laws," in order to account for the strange new phenomenon. Whether they liked it or not, here was something which compelled attention, would draw interest to itself: and seemed to reach the desired result by an illegitimate bypath from the beaten highroad. The history of criticism is ironically amusing because it is the exposure of this critical discomfiture in the face of the pioneers who have made the history of the arts. We see it illustrated with Wordsworth over a century ago in England; with Whitman in America, half a century since; with Wagner in Germany at about the same time. Truly original creative persons have a way of seeming to upset standards; in the end, it is perceived that they are only enlarging boundaries, and so advancing the

interests of art. And the professional critics, prone to conservatism, suspicious of any departure from the usual, follow these leaders cautiously from afar, grumbling and very loth; only at last to turn on the poor guessing public with a superbly inconsistent, "I told you so." Two views are still tenable with regard to Shaw as an artist of the theatre. One may say that his plays are bad technically, but that the intellectual stimulus he offers is so great, and his topics so vital, and his gift of word and for character so decided, that these dramas appeal in spite of poor construction, inadequate dramatic motivation and handling. One who inclines to this view is likely to refer glibly to the "talk drama" of Shaw (as if all drama that is drama in the full sense were not talk drama), and to speak of his plays as "dramatised conversation."

The other view, maintained by the present critic, sees in the Shaw plays a skilful adaptation of means to end. A typical Shavian play is a story framework around an idea which the playwright wishes to enforce; and having the technical problem of telling the story within stage limitations so as to make it interesting, more interesting than

it would be in the form of narrated fiction, for example, while bringing out the idea inherent in the treatment. Given this object, which, be it noted, is not always the object of a play, which may contain no idea at all, nor have a desire to bring home such an idea,—it is accomplished with the sure hand which can only be attained by sound workmanship. Technic has no meaning save as it is related to a given form and purpose. Shaw's drama—let me say it again—is the drama of idea: intellectual drama, drama that is psychologic in that its aim is to reveal character in the cause of an idea, and therefore doctrinaire, in that through dialogue, scene, and action it desires to maintain, set forth, and bring home a theory. Over and above this, to be good drama, there must be entertainment in the way of a story, with attractions along the way in wit, humor, characterization, and the heightened moments called situations. These are to be found in Shaw. But, evidently, in such drama, story becomes secondary, character is important, and it is the underlying idea which unifies all.

If this purpose and its legitimacy be accepted, the careful student of Shaw cannot escape the

conclusion that he is an able craftsman, conscious of his material, knowing how to handle his tools, and achieving results that are not accidental. His dramas are by no means on a par of merit (as he would be the first to say), either for interest, importance of theme, or dramaturgic skill; he himself calls "Fanny's First Play" a "potboiler," and "Great Catherine" "tomfoolery." No writer sees himself with clearer eyes. His product is unequal, exactly as is that of all able artists, beginning with Homer. He falls below his best at times, since the definition of "best" demands and implies it. But prevailingly, and markedly in eight or ten pieces, the skilled shaping of the material in order to get the essentials out of the subject-matter and impart the satisfaction germane to the theatre is too definitely exhibited to give the theory that Shaw's method of dramatic writing is a haphazard dash at an art he does not command, a leg to stand on. This is no fortuitous success. As Dr. Henderson puts it, "he violates all the rules, yet turns the trick"; and the violation, be it added, is only seeming. Let us put it in this way: he violates existing conventions and makes some new rules, since a rule is

but the formulation of a successful way of accomplishing a writer's purpose. It might further be argued that in those cases where the technic of a play seems most careless or furthest removed from the proper method, it is to be explained not as ignorance or carelessness, but from the nature of the piece, the author possibly caring more about making his thesis plain than he does to give his play acting value. It should not be forgotten and may be said again that by deliberate choice Shaw elects to write the drama in which thesis is prominent, not to say dominant. He has declared that there is "no future now for any drama without music except the drama of thought," and stated his own "determination to accept problem as the normal material of the drama."

It can readily be admitted that there are some plays of Shaw more dramatic than others, or plays more unsuited to the stage than others: "Candida," for example, being first-class stage material, where "Getting Married" is far behind it in this respect. Yet why assume that the latter is an instance of malexpertness, while the former accidentally happens to be good? It would appear more rational to believe that the playwright, hav-

ing demonstrated, as he so often does, his ability to make drama of acting quality, deliberately chose in other cases to forfeit a certain amount of stage effectivism, for the sake of dealing with his subject in a way best to convey his ideas. In fact, it is part of Shaw's originality that he has dared to introduce unstagy matter into the theatre and given it sufficient theatric appeal to keep it there long enough to carry a message to folk ready to receive it. It is perfectly safe to say that the author himself never imagined the acting value of "Getting Married" to equal that of "Candida" or "Mrs. Warren's Profession." But he wished to put a thorough discussion of marriage upon the boards; and gave it enough of vivacious life and novel interest to make it amusing to a general audience. He threw it into one-act form because he knew he did not have a story of sufficient constructional value to justify the usual form; a fact in itself illustrating his freedom and skill in stage architecture. And his subject being, as it was, intensely contemporary and his characterization and dialogue as usual brilliant, he was able to overcome, to a great extent at least, the natural objection brought against this

drama that it was "nothing but talk." The point to be made here is, that Bernard Shaw in his play-making is not to be placed with Mr. Granville Barker in his "Madras House" or Tchekov in his "Cherry Orchard," where the result is not a play at all; by a play I mean a stage story coherently and progressively aiming at a climax, the natural and inevitable target of all good drama. And the talk in favor of this amorphous play-making which neglects plot and organic development for the sake of other and better things, is effectually blocked by replying that you can get all those other estimable things more surely if you obey the laws of sound dramaturgy at the same time. Delight is a great digester of "truth to life," and to be dull and dreary is to be "real" in no desirable sense. And Shaw, much misunderstanding to the contrary, does not forget this fundamental demand of the stage in his work. His drama may be unusual in form but it is not formless.

But the mistake about Shaw's technic goes deeper. In the piece mentioned and in others, the assumption that there is a story and no growth or organic approach to a climax is quite aside

from the truth. The story is there, but the telling of it varies according to the sort of story it is, and his purpose in treating it. And it is significant and most helpful in understanding Shaw's method, to see that the story looked at by itself is not seldom far-fetched, farcical, improbable, whereas the psychology of the characters is seriously treated, and beneath the fantastic framework of plot lurks an equally serious social commentary. The dramatist seems to give his seriousness the relief of this external foolery, thus catching the attention of the light-minded, who otherwise would go about their business and never heed him at all. And it is the confusion begotten by these two things, I believe, fable and message, that land those simple souls in trouble who seek hastily and half-heartedly to understand this writer of stage plays who happens also to be the sober writer of essays on political economy. Nothing could be wilder in extravaganza than the fable play, " Androcles and the Lion," as we have noted. Yet, witnessing it, when one is already familiar with this dramatist, one is inclined to refrain from the guffaw aroused by the trick lion, because of the constant underlying suggestions re-

garding religion, specific and narrow, and universal and fundamental. The beast epic in relation to man, the law of kindness towards our elder and humbler brothers, these are so much in the thoughtful spectator's mind, that as the animal walks off the stage with Androcles, and the unthinking have their laugh, the meditative minority to be found even in an American theatre may find itself not far from the civilized tear. To humanize frigid historical material is in itself an achievement the value of which remains after the laughter dies.

The statement hereinbefore made that the telling of the story varies with the manner of story it is, technic being thus plastic to the shifting demand, has been illustrated in my treatment of "The Devil's Disciple," as well as in other instances.

The point is, that the intention to halt what is called "action" on the stage for the sake of discussion, and thus to violate dramatic conventions, is a very different thing from ignorantly writing undramatic scenes. We may properly enough debate whether Bernard Shaw be not undramatic in certain plays or parts of plays; it

all depends upon what you mean by undramatic. But it is absurd to claim that he is missing fire like an amateur. Right or wrong as to the results, he knows the rules of the game, consciously alters or ignores them, chooses to do what he does, and takes the risks. This, it will be conceded, is quite other than to blunder along, and sometimes hit upon success. For in spite of the risks run and the unstagy things done, success frequently follows; too frequently to be an accident.

We shall never get down to the root of the matter until the fundamental question is faced: What is "action" on the stage? Persons a-plenty patronizingly drop a kind word for Shaw, because of his general cleverness, but sapiently add: "Of course, he has no action, you know; but he's great fun, isn't he?" a remark somewhat hard to bear. "Action" to the Philistine means physical bustle, and nothing else; unless two or more persons demonstrate emotional arousement by jumping about a stage, the drama is at once dubbed dull. And the play becomes proportionately more "dramatic" as more persons are added, until the effect is that of a mob that shouts and surges

and perhaps tears down a house, to the sound of guns. But unfortunately for this primitive view, a Norwegian by the name of Ibsen has taught the theatre-going world that action may be a state within as well as a row without; that two persons, Nora and Helmer, her husband, let us say, standing quietly together and talking in ordinary, every-day tones, may give us a sense of stressed emotional values in human life such as no frenzied mob at its highest howl can secure. Action, we now know pretty well, since it is fully illustrated by modern drama and gives that drama its chief significance, is anything on the stage that makes us to enter sympathetically into the psychologic tension of the stage folk whose fortunes engage us. And it is more and more the habit of current play-making of the better sort to show this "action" with the quiet restraint which throws emphasis upon states of mind and emotional crises, with a laudable desire not to overstep their modesty of nature. Modern stage action, in a word, tends to become psychologic, rather than physical and acrobatic.

Shaw, then, is full of action, if only there be conceded to that much-abused word a connotation

which implies something besides door slamming and dextrous gyrations of the body. There is no true antithesis between talk and action; for the right kind of talk on the stage is the most tremendous action in the world to posit crisis, show character, and create climax.

"Situation" is another favorite word with those who fall into the conventional chatter about the drama; without situation, no self-respecting play is supposed to survive the arrows of outraged criticism. What is meant obviously by such a demand is that a play to be a play must at certain points commonly associated in modern dramaturgy with the fall of a curtain give an effect of increased tension, of arrived crisis; that sharpening of story which is in its staccato quality peculiar to the stage in contrast with other forms of narrative.

It is equally foolish to deny that in this respect Shaw's plays are richly supplied with situations. One such, most original and effective, is the scene in the third act of "The Devil's Disciple," where Dudgeon and the minister's wife discuss his deed in saving her husband's life, and to her bewildered astonishment he disclaims any

love for her. And in the same play another of first-class quality is the final trial scene. There are few finer situations on the English stage than that in "Candida," where the *drame à trois* culminates in the wife's choice between lover and husband; and greater still, as we saw, because of the nature of the scene, is that terrible confrontation in "Mrs. Warren's Profession" of mother by daughter, with its tragic issue for the former. Again, it is a situation of high value when, at the end of "Captain Brassbound's Conversion," the pseudo-pirate pleads for Lady Cicely's love; to which we may add the final curtain of "Man and Superman," the second act curtain of "Arms and the Man," and the central and only scene of "The Showing-up of Blanco Posnet." The death of the artist in act third of "The Doctor's Dilemma" is one of the most daringly novel and theatrically effective scenes in the range of modern drama. The stage value of these and such others as every Shaw student will easily add, is so apparent as to make all the more strange the reiteration of the stupid statement that Shaw lacks action and instinct for stage effects. On the contrary, he has the instinct carefully forti-

fied and fructified by much thought and labor both as critic and playwright, so that the trained hand and the cool craftsman's head coöperate and result in the grasp of dramatic material which means a capable theatre artist. In his best plays, growth, clash, and crisis, ever denotements of real drama, instead of the purely literary performances of would-be dramatists, are present; if we will but get rid of a too narrow understanding of dramatic requirements.

The probable reason so many fail to see this capability in Shaw's technic, the power to arrange story in appealing crescendo moments of incident and character, so that, chemically united, what is called climax is the result, is because this playwright subordinates situation to his deeper purposes of theme and characterization; subordinates, let me repeat, but not eliminates. He is, so to say, chary of it, only furnishing these popular effects as they may be necessary to make a play which shall engage the attention of a general audience to his subject in hand. Thus he differs by the whole sky from dramatists like Scribe or Bernstein, to whom such effects are the principal aim, not an incident in a larger pur-

pose. Like Ibsen before him, he rather shuns too obvious "curtains," and prefers the illusion produced by giving the broken rhythm of life instead of the too perfect symmetry of self-conscious theatre art.

And it is interesting to realize that all the more credit goes to Shaw, the technician, for so often producing situations in the common meaning of the word, in that he boldly and contemptuously tramples on all the most sacred principles of psychology involved traditionally in those situations. Thus, in the climax of "The Devil's Disciple," Dudgeon, who, by immemorial stage law, should love the minister's fair spouse, and so explain his gallant conduct, coolly repudiates any such motive. And yet, this is as arresting as if he had obeyed the rules of the French triangle (of which the play makes fun), and drawn the unresisting lady to his breast. In the same fashion, Candida's choice is all the fresher and more sensational, in other words, of more stage value, because she chooses her husband in place of her lover; too original, in truth, for the boulevards. Shaw abandons all the tricks and character turns which were believed to be invincible

on the boards of a theatre, and makes the supposedly tame reverse still more exciting. It is hard not to admire such fortesse of handling.

As a summary, one may say that Shaw has the genuine playwright's feeling for that one central scene around which the whole dramatic structure is built, towards which it naturally moves and from which it recedes when the main purpose is accomplished; the obligatory scene, as Mr. Archer paraphrases the French term, which every true theatre artist knows he must give his audience to satisfy it, can generally be found in the representative dramas of this writer; and if absent, a reason is not lacking. Nothing insures the undramatic quality of an alleged play more certainly than to substitute indirect narration for the direct showing of a thing important in the treatment. On the stage, seeing is believing, and to exhibit action instead of talking about it, is a fundamental principle of both experience and common sense. At first blush, it might appear that Shaw is an arch-sinner in this respect; but such is not the case. In the first acts of "The Devil's Disciple" and "The Doctor's Dilemma," studied earlier, there is a deal of talk, we saw, preliminary

to the start of the story; dialogue for the sake of "planting" character, to use the technical term, and to create atmosphere. But with the story under way, Shaw does not make the mistake adverted to above. Regularly, he lets the interaction of characters develop the plot; irregularly, he uses indirect statement in place of direct presentation; but this when something is to be gained in so doing. "Captain Brassbound's Conversion" is a good play to study with this in mind. The off-stage occurrences in this drama, such as the presence of the United States ship in the harbor, are pregnant with consequences to the action, yet are twice as telling as if seen by the spectator. Throughout his dramas, Shaw exhibits a nice and well-nigh infallible appreciation of the difference between expositional and suggestive off-stage material and that sort of narrative which means fiction instead of a play. There is no subtler test of technic than this.

Closely allied with this mistake about Shaw's power in situation is that which denies him emotional quality. One smiles instinctively at this allegation, since emotionalism is so marked a trait of this writer as almost to deserve first mention.

To be sure, he seems to be an intellect attacking the false and foolish emotions of others; but no one becomes more emotionally aroused or imparts more of the heat and light of such a state than this same writer. He is, above all, an incorrigible romanticist, shy of himself. What is really meant when, masking as a cold intellectualist, he is charged with a lack of heart and its corollary, too much head, is not that the emotion is absent but that it is of the wrong kind or out of place. There is, for example, immense emotional content and effect in the central scene referred to in "Mrs. Warren's Profession." It fairly quivers with feeling, white-hot and poignant. But the trouble is that this exhibition of mother and daughter at grapple is a destructive attack upon the usual sentimental depiction of this relation and this seems to confirmed sentimentalists cold and abhorrent. In this sense, but in this sense only, the scene might be called unsympathetic and Vivie herself an intellectualized repellent character. In other words, we must carefully explain what emotion implies before deciding whether our dramatist commands it. If the term be used broadly enough to include aroused feeling with

regard to vital human activities and relations, then no writer for the stage, past or present, excels Shaw in the power of emotional evocation. I spoke of the emotion being out of place, at times. In a scene already referred to as perhaps the most remarkable he ever conceived, that of the death of the artist in "The Doctor's Dilemma," we get a good illustration. The words of Dubedat, as he bids good-bye to his wife and recites his wonderful credo, are a-pulse with profound feeling which calls forth a like feeling in the hearer. One recognizes that the dramatist is stirred to his depths. Yet it may well be doubted whether this scene, magnificent as it is for imaginative suggestion, rich in emotional content, will ever be accepted as successful by a theatreful of folk, for reasons I have explained.

One is here reminded of Tolstoy's rebuke of Shaw, when the latter made a joking reference to a matter the Russian held sacred: it would perhaps be putting it fairly to say that Shaw lacks taste at times, both as an artist and man, in the sense that he does not enough consider what is a matter of reverence to others. He is deeply reverential about that which he reverences, but I

think can be justly accused of riding roughshod over the similar feelings of others. Remember, I am considering the emotional quality of Shaw at this moment simply as an element which enters into the technical result and removes his work from that dry display of the intellect out of place in a playhouse. Technic must have emotional material to use as a very condition of its existence.

Broadly speaking, no doubt Shaw, like Ibsen, uses the realistic method to tell his story and convey his theme. The folk of his fancy talk and act in the quiet key of external truth, whatever may be said of the purport of what they utter, or of the uniqueness of their psychology. Superficially viewed, they are of all stage people the most unromantic in the way they aim at the *via media* of daily life. Shaw is ever striving to create the illusion of reality. Critics would perhaps agree that in the denotements of speech, dress, and carriage he secures the desired effect in this fashion; but would clash when it comes to the deeper truth of human character. To some, Shaw's characters are simply projections of Shaw, the playwright himself talking behind a disguise more or

less thin; sometimes, as we noted in the case of Tanner, hardly a disguise at all. In the final attempt to place Shaw in contemporary drama as a literary force, I have attended to the question whether this dramatist has the higher creative power in characterization. Here, with technic in mind, let it be noted that, given his aim, his fictive folk are skilfully done because they carry the double rôle of exponents of his theory yet seemingly real human beings. His so-called realism as a method properly applies to his manipulation of character and is a part of the technical use of his art. His *dramatis personæ* appear to do things so odd, bizarre, or outrageous as to bring up the grave question of psychologic accuracy. Would Candida, we ask, turn to her husband when she makes her choice? Would Ann pursue the man of her selection with such unrelenting, all but awful oneness of purpose? Would the family in "You Never Can Tell" receive the long-lost father upon his return in so cold and critical a fashion? And would typical young women of the day substitute eugenical considerations instead of the conventional emotional response to wooing? If we reply, No, then

we must deny him the realism which is reality, not merely photography and superficial appearance. It may be conceded that at times Shaw, looking ahead and picturing the desirable Future rather than the faulty Present, uses the method of allegory—as does Ibsen—and by so much departs from the technic of pure realism. We should not forget his whimsical statement that he learned from Mozart to make all his characters geniuses. But it is, I believe, undeniable that by the most skilful painting of the physical semblances of humanity on the stage, Shaw secures for his puppets a credence, during the actual presentation of his play, such as might not upon analysis be accorded to men and women in life. And this is an achievement in artistry.

The flexibility and experimental nature of Shaw's technic may be seen among other illustrations in his handling of the act division. He throws his theme into one, three, four, or five acts, as he pleases, according to the nature of the piece, its demand in the particulars of growth and pause and heightened effects. The texture and intention of his material alike come into the decision. "Getting Married," "The Showing-up

of Blanco Posnet," "The Man of Destiny," "How He Lied to Her Husband," "Press Cuttings," and "The Dark Lady of the Sonnets" testify how often he has preferred the form that means a continuous performance, with time values varying from a half-hour to two hours, to the conventional playing time of a full-length drama. Several of his best plays are in the three-act form now favored by the skilled artisans of the stage. But "The Doctor's Dilemma" is in five acts, a form supposed to be obsolete (at least for realistic drama), and so are "Cæsar and Cleopatra" and "Pygmalion"; while into four acts he has thrown several dramas, including "Man and Superman," "You Never Can Tell," and "Captain Brassbound's Conversion." Further examples of free handling may be noted in "Fanny's First Play," with its induction and epilogue, and in "Androcles and the Lion," where the material suggests chronicle history and the form becomes correspondingly plastic. This adaptation of form to substance indicates the genuine dramatist who creates a formula but does not allow it to bulldoze him into the slavish following of a model.

Shaw is a pioneer in the one-act play, which is an interesting and significant development of modern drama, widening its possibilities, and affording some of the ablest playwrights of the day, —Barrie, Kennedy, Middleton, Sudermann, Zangwill, Strindberg,—the list might be made formidable,—to produce effects not so well secured in the full-length play. The one-acter is now slowly but, I imagine, surely gaining recognition in England and America, and has been for a longer time influential in Europe; as where Strindberg, a master in this genre, presented in his own theatre in Stockholm many of the best examples of his own work. The work of the Irish Players in Dublin and on tour, and in America such companies as that once at The Princess and The Washington Square Players in New York, together with the various Little Theatres of the country, have done much to bring vogue in English-speaking lands to this form of drama. Shaw's influence in popularizing the play, long or short, without act division, is certainly considerable. That he appreciates the opportunity offered by this simplification of form can be seen in his note to "Getting Married."

As it involves this morphological question beyond its application to the drama in hand, and throws light upon the dramatist's view, it is worth quoting here: "There is a point of some technical interest in this play. The customary division into acts has been disused, and a return made to unity of time and space, as observed in the ancient Greek drama. In the foregoing tragedy, 'The Doctor's Dilemma,' there are five acts: the place is altered five times and the time is spread over an undetermined period of more than a year. No doubt the strain on the attention of the audience and on the ingenuity of the playwright is much less; but I find in practice that the Greek form is inevitable when drama reaches a certain point in poetic and intellectual evolution. Its adoption was not, on my part, a deliberate display of virtuosity in form, but simply the spontaneous falling of a play of ideas into the form most suitable to it, which turned out to be the classical form. 'Getting Married,' in several acts, with the time spread over a long period, would be impossible."

Here, it may be remarked, is the self-conscious craftsman meditating upon the subtleties of his

craft, and doing nothing by accident. The definite simplification of form which has marked the changing drama of our day under Ibsen's influence is a move towards the closer fitting of form to substance: given the emphasis upon psychology which that drama chose to exercise, and fewer acts, one scene, and fewer characters, were sure to follow. And the one-act form would seem to be logically the carrying out of this principle to its natural limit.

Shaw has done more than anyone else to give literary quality to that part of a play which is outside the dialogue: the stage "business" and the descriptions of character. Of old, this was done in an hieroglyphic way, a species of linguistic arithmetic. "So-and-so comes down right, takes chair; business of using handkerchief." This sort of jargon is not conducive to a mood which would like to regard a drama as a piece of literature, a part of belles lettres. And it is a sad blow to the illusion of story and picture. It is likely one of the reasons why the reading of stage plays, when printed, has not in the past been popular. Such reading is now rapidly becoming a habit because, among other reasons, the printed drama is not

offering these laconic algebraic symbols in place of the written-out speech which literature demands. In this change, Shaw is a leader. Indeed, nobody has done so much to improve the situation. As a literary man, with a bias for fit speech, he has made stage directions and character delineations "literary," given them expressional worth; and also added much to our understanding of the psychology of his dramatic children. But in his zeal to remove technical and unpleasant details from a play in book form, he has allowed himself to fall into the danger of obtruding his own personality into the text, so that one receives the shock of hearing G. B. S. speak in the first person just as one was coming under the illusion of the scene and story. Still, the balance of gain is undoubtedly in favor of the reader; and the writer's influence in helping thus to rehabilitate the play by associating it with the reading habit and suggesting that it may be a part of literature, and the current drama thus become a recognized part of the great body of drama of past times, is a thing to be unfeignedly thankful for.

But are they not reading rather than acting

plays, after all, does some one ask? Shaw first sought his audience through the publication of his dramas, which could find no producer; did he not shape his work for such appreciation, and fail to fit it to the more practical tests of the stage? To this inquiry the answer is obvious. If we were obliged in honesty to say, Yes, Shaw's technic would instantly be involved. This dramatist would fall into the same class with Shelley, Tennyson, Swinburne, and Stevenson; great writers, but not strictly playwrights at all.

It happens, however, that the contemporary world is finding out, with more or less naïve surprise, that Shaw meets the theatre test and in fact is turning out to be one of the best acting dramatists of the British theatre. He has nicely fooled many of us in this way. Again and again, the student of Shaw will have read some drama of his before seeing it played, and made up his mind that while delightful to read, it was not suited to stage requirements; only to ascertain that it was one of the best acting plays of the day. I confess to being misled by "You Never Can Tell," a reading of which did not by any means reveal the saliency of character and scene which makes

this farce comedy such an unchallenged success. No doubt others, if put into the confessional, could bear similar testimony.

But does the fact that Shaw's dramas have a thesis injure them as vehicles for the stage, where technic in art and entertainment in aim unite to make good dramaturgy? We have already made the point that there is story so well as thesis in these productions; more in "Fanny's First Play," certainly, and less in "Getting Married," according to the purpose or mood of the playwright; nobody would find as much seriousness of intention in "How He Lied to Her Husband" and "Great Catherine" as in "Mrs. Warren's Profession" and "Candida." But predominantly, the didactics are mitigated by the genuine dramatic qualities of entertainment; and, the proof of the pudding being in the eating, behold the box office result! Nothing is surer than the statement that if Shaw were more preacher than dramatist, his plays would steadily fail. To be sure, he addresses a special and happily fast-growing audience; an audience which would desire civilized fun. He has dared to seek, and seeking has found, a public ready, even eager, for plays that dealt

freshly, forcibly, honestly, and seriously with life; and to this rapidly crystallizing body of theatre patrons his work is an intellectual tonic, and an esthetic pleasure. But let it be repeated, that over and above this audience naturally responding to such a genius of the serious theatre, there are elements in Shaw's appeal which make him agreeable to the lighter section of the theatre-going public, which, while it mistakes his meaning and has but a parody of the man in mind, does buy seats for his "show"!

Yes, Shaw cut the Gordian knot by remaining intellectual without being dull. This is not to say that some of his dramas are not comparative failures. It is only to claim that for the most part Shavian stage stories amuse people generally, and hold their place persistently as acting drama. And there could be, I insist, no higher tribute to Shaw as a craftsman in the playhouse. This is the supreme and ultimate test; that against heavy odds, and reversing an earlier opinion, the plays by Bernard Shaw are increasingly popular. Nothing but sound technic as a basis for this result could lead to such a result. The notion that Shaw succeeds in spite of defective

workmanship may be allowed to pass into that Walhalla where critical and other mistakes repent them of their earthly errors. His plays bristle with technical proof of stage knowledge; the avoidance of the soliloquy and aside, the careful motivation of all exits and entrances as part of the aim to preserve the integrity of character and plot; the sense of situation and climax; the cunning control of light and shade, whereby monotony of tone is escaped; and the wise freedom with which, as I have tried to show, the dramatic form has been modified to fit a fresh purpose; all this offers evidence to the trained observer of a forthright technician and one of the truly original artists of the modern stage.

CHAPTER X

SHAW'S PLACE IN MODERN DRAMA

Every writer has a double significance. He may be regarded for his worth abstracted from any consideration of time and place, as we regard the indisputable masters like Homer, Dante, Shakspere. Or, confessedly perhaps of secondary importance compared with these, he may yet bulk large in the history of letters because of what he accomplished in the evolution of the literary form and movement of which he is a part. His value for his time, in this way, can be so great as to constitute him a major figure, whatever be his final fate, after the winnowing of Time has separated the wheat from the chaff.

Contemporary judgment can never be sure of a writer's place and importance in himself apart from these relations to school and period: the story of literary criticism with its laughable mistakes, its ironic reversal of opinions, has demonstrated that. But it is within the modest scope

of the estimate that has not the advantage of time's perspective, to recognize certain relative values and catch the meaning of the individual author, his service in literary evolution.

Shaw may be considered in this latter way, while we waive the ultimate question of permanent standing, a phrase, indeed, which is self-contradictory, as truly when we have Shakespere in mind as when we seek to indicate the rank of one still living; how do we know in the year of grace 1916 that the greatest dramatist of them all will survive the shocks of Time so that we may speak of his contribution as "permanent"? We only know that he has successfully weathered the storms of three hundred years.

The practical question then is, what impress has Bernard Shaw made upon the generation which, under the leadership of Ibsen, has contributed to the development of English-speaking drama? Is his place distinctive, important, has it significance? Has he contributed to make what we call modern drama in such manner as to influence it in form and substance, in aim and accomplishment? For one, I believe the answer must be an affirmative.

But what *is* modern drama, since we must delimit and define in order to see Shaw in his due relation to the interesting movement of which he is a part?

A generation is usually taken to include a period of about thirty-five years. The drama that has been produced between 1880 and the present can be called distinctively modern and is the drama made by Ibsen and his contemporaries and followers, in Europe and the English-speaking lands. This movement is definite and means, broadly speaking, a more serious attempt to consider life in the theatre, to make the drama thoughtful; and to use a technic which is the logical form for plays that draw nearer to life and emphasize psychology as a central interest for dramatist and audience alike. A type of play has thus been evolved which, whatever its loss on the side of poetry and the attraction deriving from so-called literary excellence, has gained greatly in reality and truth; has permanently contributed to dramatic literature certain qualities of force, insight, and democratic sympathy; and at times has brought forth masterpieces whose effect as works of art has been to communicate

the illusion of truth in dealing with modern life.

In this shaping of the play under modern conditions and with modern aims, Ibsen beyond all question is the leader; as significant for our time as Shakspere was for his. He gave modern technic its formula and made the playhouse a place where the great social themes now naturally engaging attention might be discussed. Nor did he in so doing turn the stage into a pulpit; for his dramas were essentially stories told with the skill necessary to make them theatre material. Stern as may be the view, and polemic as are some of the theses, Ibsen did not show himself as first the preacher and second the playwright, but in the trained opinion of Europe, as above all else, first, last, and all the time, a literary force, an artist who used the stage form of story.

In the revolutionary nature of his technic, the seriousness of his themes, and the seemingly destructive quality of his social criticism, Shaw is the foremost follower of the Scandinavian on English soil. The differences between them are many and wide; it would be utterly misleading to say that the Irishman imitates Ibsen; for no man

is more himself, keenly sensitive as he nevertheless is to the social thought currents of our day. But there is, when all reservations are made, a fundamental fellowship between the two: both are critics of society, realists in method, individualists in attitude and teaching, and technicians who boldly adapt the stage traditions to their particular kind of endeavor.

In this sense, and without the unfair generalization which allows for no personal dissimilarity, it is not amiss to describe Shaw as the English Ibsen. And there can be no question, I believe, that his position in the school which has grown up on English ground is of like importance. He is not only the most brilliant satiric dramatist who uses English speech during the period under discussion, but the most influential. He has been a pioneer, I have suggested, in giving prominence to the idea of the printed play as a part of letters; and his plays have been so printed as to make the important distinction between a stage drama reproduced, shorthand direction and all, in book form, and the same play so printed as to be pleasurable reading because intelligently aimed at the reading public, and accompanied by prefaces

that are in themselves worthy pieces of critical literature about the stage and its children.

Shaw in his themes and his way of handling those themes has also pointed out the path of freedom to his contemporaries. At a moment when it was daring to do so, and spelled defeat, he introduced unpleasant and unpopular topics upon the stage, and instead of allowing himself to be discouraged by the cold reception, or lack of reception at all, stalwartly stuck by his guns and waited for an audience to grow up to him; in this respect, offering a sharp contrast with other playmakers, including some very well-known ones, who, beginning with ideas and the desire to do worthy work, serious in intention and unusual in character, found it to their advantage to abandon such an advanced position and preferred to win immediate favor by catering to the mob. Shaw from the very first had the courage of his convictions, and nearly starved before forcing his day to give him a hearing. His services in making free speech concerning vital topics possible upon the English-speaking stage are so unique that it is highly likely his significance in this regard will be an increasing element in the lasting

place he will take in our dramatic evolution. No better way to remove the absurdity of an incompetent censor can be devised than to have him forbid the presentation of such plays as "Mrs. Warren's Profession" and "The Showing-up of Blanco Posnet." Such action is its own worst enemy.

This dramatist has also performed a definite service in establishing the fact that our stage can be serious in intent, so far as the nature of the subject-matter and aim of the author are concerned, without giving up the specific object of the theatre to entertain its patrons.

It is Shaw's peculiar gift and therefore his distinctive service, to use the playhouse for serious discussion without being dull; a fact amply illustrated in the previous discussions. It is not the intellectuals alone who appreciate and applaud him, but the general theatre public; a public caring little or nothing about his ideas or reformatory purposes, but reacting gladly to his wit and humor, his flair for character, his genius for story and situation. He kills two birds with one stone because of the ambidextrous way in which he thus wins the approbation of gallery and dress circle

alike. His plays, often spoken of by commercial managers as if they were the temporary fad or pose of the elect, are in reality popular in the democratic use of the word. These facts rebut the assertion that Shaw's dramas are not really dramas at all, but stage discussions. If a stage story be an interesting grouping of a number of human beings around the centralizing magnet of an idea, then our dramatist usually gives his patrons a story; and to carry it, he furnishes out of a very remarkable creative fecundity a large, distinct, and enjoyable number of characters embracing most of the types of English folk to be observed in the length and breadth of modern Great Britain. That these characters are salient, vivid, and highly amusing and arresting can hardly be denied.

It is important in the attempt to settle Shaw's position in modern drama to answer the question: Has he the power of genuine character creation and projection? Here is a fundamental test of any dramatist. For, if the answer be in the affirmative, then he takes his place among the playwrights who are something more; masters of life, interpreters of human beings to the masses

of mankind. Such artists wear the purple by right; they are of the tribe of Shakspere and Molière and Ibsen. Is it not true both for novelist and stage story-teller that this is the question of questions: that it is their highest function to make us see, know, and be deeply influenced by the fictive creatures of their imagination who yet possess more of verity for us than the flesh-and-blood persons whom we daily meet in the dream called Life?

In considering Shaw's rank, then, such a searching matter must be grappled with, looking to his final award. It is frequently asserted that Bernard Shaw's stage figures are not human beings at all, but merely projections of his own individuality; clothes-horses upon which to hang his whimsies and crotchets; brilliant, galvanized puppets, not reproductions of the actualities of life recognizable as "true to experience": a phrase which means—so far as it means anything—the traits and actions which square with our more or less limited observation and knowledge of the world of men. This is a charge which has also been made, and perhaps always will be made against the fictive creatures of Charles Dickens;

a charge somewhat puzzling to sustain, inasmuch as that novelist, whether his men and women are veritable or not, manages to make them of lasting reality in the affectionate memories of mankind.

The most ardent adherent of our dramatist is not likely to claim unreservedly that he stands with the greatest in the portrayal of character. But it is quite possible to concede this, without the extreme of declaring that behind his men and women in general, stalks G. B. S. in a more or less thin disguise: the mask of sex, or social condition or type. I do not think that there is either perception of his quality or justice to his achievements in such assertion. The writer who has conceived and embodied William the waiter, Mrs. Warren and Vivie, Dick Dudgeon, Candida, Lady Cicely, Napoleon and Cæsar, Doyle, Drinkwater, Jack Tanner and Ann, Barbara, Blanco Posnet, and Dubedat,—these a few, where the number extended to meet personal variations of preference might be indefinitely increased,—cannot be accused of a failure to add to the English portrait gallery some distinctive and successful figures. If they seem non-human at first meeting, it may be well to ask ourselves if we have

not been made accustomed in the consulship of Plancus to conventionalized patterns of men and women rather than to very humanity. Perhaps part of our debt to Shaw lies in the fact that he has forced us to see and get wonted to stage persons who, like their counterparts in life, are a curious bundle of contradictions; the dramatist thus broadening the gamut of stage painting. The allegation that Shaw's characters are unreal I suspect to be as unsound as the allegation that his plays are nothing but talk. At least, it will be good physic for our ego to cherish the thought that inability to recognize Shaw's stage creatures may be due not to their being out of drawing but to some defect in our vision.

To be more specific: this writer draws historical personages like Napoleon and Cæsar, and rudely disturbs the conventional conception of these worthies. Is this merely an attempt to wrest amusement out of some of the stock material of history, to the result of an effect of fresh handling of somewhat shop-worn figures? It might easily be so taken, and often is. But it were wiser to see that such rehabilitation is in the service of a perfectly sober theory on Shaw's part: namely,

he is of the opinion that the usual representation of a man like Cæsar, world-conqueror and author of the "Commentaries," quite hides the rather important fact that he was a human being: and in the play which deals with him he endeavors to explain Cæsar by humanizing him. The real man had been lost in the Et tu Brute pose. Shaw tries to motivate one whom we know through a few unsatisfactory external incidents and acts. Whether he brings us nearer to the real Cæsar is not primarily the question: the aim is worthy, and the method, it would seem, sound: for without consistent motivation, historical characters sink into hopeless figureheads: become what George Washington became to countless school children, the man who could not tell a lie; in other words, an unbelievable spook. How it warms Washington for us if we only hear some one say that he *could* lie, but refused to do so! We begin not only to believe in him, but to admire him.

Those who in declaring that the Father of his Country could not tell a lie sought to do him a service, overlooked the sufficiently patent fact that it is exactly the way to kill all interest in his character or even existence. Yet no less an his-

torian than Bancroft solemnly sets down the statement that Washington could no more depart from truth than a star from its orbit. One can but wonder if the youngest schoolboy will swallow that. If he do, he must be profoundly discouraged at the information. It really would seem as if in the older treatment of the immortal George, the function of history were to make Americanism a myth and patriotism a nuisance.

At least, then, we must distinguish between Shaw creating monstrosities, mere projections of himself, and Shaw widening the range of stage characters by refusing to be confined to the well-worn categories: the "leads," "heavies," and "juveniles" of tradition.

At bottom, it is a question of creation. If such characters are shells into which personal theories can be poured, and are made by their begetter for that purpose, then they cannot ring true as genuine characterization. We see them through an historical glass, darkly.

And so in the dramatist's handling of humanity, whether historical or fictive, we have to ask ourselves if we are not confusing truth and tradition.

If this idea that Shaw's stage people are possibly truer than the stage convention and nearer life just because they seem oddly different be a sound one, then logically his characters will gain in credence and acceptability as time familiarizes us with them and a broader, deeper conception of what human beings really are creeps gradually into art. At present, it is, I imagine, temperate to say that Shaw has given the world many salient, enjoyable studies of modern types and made them live as veritable flesh-and-blood creatures and not mere skeletons upon which to hang the trappings of his Shavian notions.

It will, with less probable objection, be granted that the dialogue through which these stage folk are revealed is of high literary excellence: in incisive attraction and the effect of truth, the verisimilitude which produces the illusion of reality. One reason why plays like "She Stoops to Conquer" and "The School for Scandal" hold the boards today is because the language in which they are written is of genuine worth: they are not only good acting plays but pieces of literature, as we say. And it is exactly so with Shaw's: they stand the test of reading and re-reading. How

many plays do? Bernard Shaw is a conspicuous and important dramatist today for the very good reason, though by no means the only one, that he has style: his manner of writing is his own, and possesses distinction and a happy idiomatic freshness. He is, quite independent of being a dramatist, one of the few admirable and sound writers of the day.

With characterization and dialogue to his credit, we may add that he has a gift, over and above all that industry can do to develop it, for the dramatic nexus of a story blossoming in scene and situation: and we might define a situation as a scene at its tensest moment of interest. All the reiterated careless talk about Shaw's having no theatre sense for curtains and climaxes is comically erroneous, as I trust the discussion of the dramas in sequence has shown; it overlooks his constant and brilliant control and manipulation of the raw material of the theatre in such wise as to give us scenes of all but unexampled power. Even in a play like "Getting Married," which might be named as the least dramatic of his repertory, when we have listened straight through to the vivid battledore and shuttlecock of an argu-

ment which curiously neither tires nor bores, is not the scene when the mayoress turns mystic one that has very great stage value—allowing, of course, for the genre of the piece, namely, satiric high comedy? When the curtain rings up on the first act of "You Never Can Tell" we saw that the very use of the dentist's office furnishes proof positive that here is a playwright, like the late Clyde Fitch in this respect, with an instinctive feeling for stage effectivism in the use of daringly homely, fresh matter, hitherto dodged by the experts of the playhouse.

The common idea that a grave defect in Shaw's equipment as playwright is to be found in his lack of emotional quality is based on a narrow and false traditional conception of the use of the human emotions in drama. When emotion is spoken of in this view, what is meant is sex emotion of a a sort, and that not the best.

With his fervently held faith in those relations of sex based upon sympathies of the mind and spirit rather than upon the appeal of the senses, he has not in thirty plays for one moment striven for attention or approval by so presenting men and women under the influence of what is euphe-

mistically called "love" as to feed the appetite for the suggestive, the sensualistic, or the passional. A dramatist who foregoes all the opportunities offered by this twiddling upon sex harmonics can certainly be said to have the courage of his convictions: he abandons instantly and forever that motive of appeal and applause which is infinitely the most telling with any general audience.

But he also foregoes this chance in the higher ranges of sex relations: scenes of tenderness, lofty sentiment, and sublimated passion are equally absent from his work; and that this abstention limits his power and cripples his effect may be granted. I would not for a moment wish to deny that some of the finest exhibitions of human psychology are lost to the dynamics of the theatre by this instinct and attitude of Shaw's; for it is both. He is so seized with the idea that a pseudo-romantic conception of each other has worked havoc with men and women in the world, that his reaction from the conventional treatment of sex leads him into an extreme that is hardly natural to his temperament, which is obviously not cool and calculating in such matters, but perfervid and—he will take

it hard of me for saying it once more—sensitively sentimental. The result is that he sternly banishes the soft and melting passages of the central passion of mankind from his scenes. Nor is he himself unaware of this weakness of his, as he would, intellectually, regard it, for he makes open fun of himself in the person of John Tanner. Tanner is humorously clear-eyed as to his infatuation for Ann, and while his judgment, his reason, rebels that he should be made part of the life-force in this humiliatingly traditional fashion, his heart moves him to take her in his arms and be happy.

If, however, for sex love in the usual sense we substitute love in various of the broader meanings of this exasperatingly protean word, we shall find this dramatist emotionally powerful and be forced to release him from the charge of being cold and intellectual at the expense of the warmer appeals of dramatic representation. The emotional value, for instance, involved in and displayed by the relations of Vivie and her mother is tremendous. And we certainly miss the point if we fail to see that the very fact of John Tanner's satirically humorous arraignment of Ann in " Man and

Superman" makes all the stronger the genuine passion with which he succumbs to her at the end. The whole relation, too, of Candida to Marchbanks, a relation offering hitherto unexplored regions to the playwright, is surcharged with emotional connotations that make the play most exciting to the perceptive auditor. No man so capable as Shaw of leviathan noble rages and lofty enthusiasms could fail to put into his depictions of humanity the swift-flowing red blood of belief and protest and prayer. It would be far nearer the truth to maintain the thesis that in his plays in general he is too emotional for his own good; meaning that he cares so much for the ideas back of his fables that, unlike Molière, it tinges his treatment with a polemic bias that injures its artistic quality. To this, the defender of Shaw might well reply that even granting the assumption, his representations have the story interest and the dramatic clinch which hold the attention and create pleasure: and that this result justifies the means.

But in estimating the position of a writer, it surely is not sufficient to credit him with excellence in the handling of the form he chooses to cast

his thought in, nor to acknowledge the pleasure to be derived from his presentation. The thought itself, as a personal reaction to life, and in the end as a contribution, destructive or constructive, to the slow shaping of human destiny which works out through the machinery we call society, must be at bottom of decisive moment in the award Time shall give him. The personality of Shaw is, as our scrutiny of his work has made apparent, piquant and arresting; and his manner of unfolding it in drama has added to the joy of nations. But is his thought, when we strive to detach it from the manner of presentation, of such validity and vitality as to endure the wear and tear of Time? That is a question that goes deeper, and cannot be dodged by any author who would claim serious consideration.

That Shaw is not a philosopher in the sense that he has evolved a synthesized general view of things, has been shown in former chapters, in the course of the study of him as social thinker and mystic poet. I have suggested that the literary artist as such is never the philosopher, first and foremost; for the moment he becomes a philosopher first, he ceases to be a literary force. Con-

sider Tolstoy. Few, if any, writers have been both. Either the philosopher has crowded out the artist, or the reverse has happened. But the artist can be full of philosophical suggestiveness, and often is; Goethe occurs to me as a noble example. In the same way, Bernard Shaw, tingling with his feeling for the intellectual currents of our era, intensely alive to the trend of modern evolution, has packed his work up to the gunwales with seemingly unsafe and therefore contraband goods and as a sort of independent cruiser upon modern seas made it lively for ships of the regular lines. He has forced them to do some quick sailing and perhaps lower the record of ocean liners, which is a service. And I believe he prefers this almost piratical sailing for the advantage it gives him of unrestraint and freedom.

And if it be correct to see Shaw primarily as a literary force, doing all the better work because he refuses to have the ponderous consistency of the cut-and-dried philosopher, then the question whether his thought is sound or not becomes secondary so far as awarding him his position is concerned. This is always true. If a writer reflect important issues of his day with force, con-

viction, and a personal attractiveness, he will survive in all probability, whatever may be the fate of his creed or theory. The belief, the style that was its honest embodiment, will remain, long after the views, judged as to their acceptability, have been thrown to the junk heap. Milton's "Paradise Lost" is still the greatest English epic, although we smile tolerantly at its theology, which now appears not only jejune but puerile. Shakspere himself is not valued three hundred years after his death for his intellectual attitudes or aspects, but is stronger than ever as our first expressionist and painter of human life. Shaw's own words, in his letter to his friend, Mr. Walkley, may be turned on himself here: "He who has nothing to assert has no style and can have none: he who has something to assert will go as far in power of style as its momentousness and his conviction will carry him. Disprove his assertion after it is made, yet its style remains. Darwin has no more destroyed the style of Job nor of Handel than Martin Luther destroyed the style of Giotto. All the assertions get disproved sooner or later; and so we find the world full of a magnificent débris of artistic fossils, with the

matter-of-fact credibility gone clean out of them, but the form still splendid."

Wise words and true, and entirely applicable to the man who wrote them. Nietzsche is not a constructive philosopher but a brilliant literary power; Ibsen is not a philosopher and by his own statement did not wish so to be taken. Browning is not a philosopher, *pace* the societies founded in his name and assuming that his function was to give us nuts to crack. Shaw gives us much to think about, and is of great value to suggest, stimulate, clarify, pique. And since he does these things in a way to be highly enjoyable he takes his place as a literary force, and now and in the future is to be studied as such. The claim that he is a later Molière may be an excessive one; but certainly he performs for his day and generation very much the same service which the greatest dramatist of France performed for his; namely, to correct morals with a smiling mouth, *castigat mores ridendo:* and to say more than this, either of Molière or Shaw, were to set them in another category than that occupied by the makers of literature. A challenging, vital thinker, a keen and fascinating wielder of words, a skilled shaper

of story in dramatic mould, a modern critic with a passion for social betterment, who lives up to his belief, and is aspirational in his social dream, it does not seem likely that when the dust of combat clears away from around a figure whose natural place is the arena, we shall fail to see him, still fighting, fighting ever on, though the cause be long since lost and won; an enheartening spectacle, as the sight of an honest fighter for a thing worth fighting for must always be. Later generations may even see Shaw plainer than do we: such reversals are the commonplace of history. But in any event, it is a little difficult at present to imagine him as supine and still; one finds it easier to hear him cry, with Browning:

> "*I was ever a fighter, so—one fight more,*
> *The best and the last!*"

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THE non-dramatic writings of Shaw are voluminous and no list of them need be given in connection with this study of the playwright. They include five pieces of fiction, two volumes of dramatic criticism, and various books of essay and criticism, of which "The Quintessence of Ibsen" is noteworthy. Much of Shaw's best thought in the field of economics and sociology is to be found in his contributions to "The Fabian Essays." The Prefaces to the plays contain a large and valuable part of his opinions not alone upon drama and the theatre, but concerning things in general: they are his explicit critical view which in the plays themselves is more or less concealed in the story.

A full list of the dramas in the order of their composition follows:

Widowers' Houses, 1885-92.
The Philanderer, 1893.
Mrs. Warren's Profession, 1893.
Arms and the Man, 1894.
Candida, 1894.
You Never Can Tell, 1895-6-7.

The Man of Destiny, 1895.
The Devil's Disciple, 1896-7.
Cæsar and Cleopatra, 1898.
Captain Brassbound's Conversion, 1898-9.
The Admirable Bashville, 1902-3.
Man and Superman, 1903-4.
John Bull's Other Island, 1904.
How He Lied to Her Husband, 1904.
Passion, Poison, and Petrifaction, 1905.
Major Barbara, 1905.
The Doctor's Dilemma, 1906.
The Interlude at The Playhouse, 1907.
Getting Married, 1908.
The Showing-up of Blanco Posnet, 1909.
Press Cuttings, 1909.
Misalliance, 1909-10.
The Dark Lady of the Sonnets, 1910.
Fanny's First Play, 1910-11.
Androcles and the Lion, 1912.
Overruled, 1912.
Pygmalion, 1912.
Great Catherine, 1913.
The Music Cure, 1913.
O'Flaherty, V. C., 1915 (*unproduced and unpublished*).

INDEX

Abbey Theatre, Dublin, 147, 187
Aberdeen, 66
Actors' Orphanage, 119
Adelphi Terrace, 30, 231
"Admirable Bashville, The: or Constancy Unrewarded," 106-107
Albany, N. Y., 89
American Academy of Dramatic Arts, 82
"Androcles and the Lion," 28, 84, 164, 167-173, 176, 247, 262
Androcles, in "Androcles and the Lion," 171, 172, 248
Ann, in "Man and Superman," 78, 109, 110, 112, 113, 179, 260, 280, 288
Archer, William, dramatic critic, and Shaw, 24, 119, 164, 255
"Areopagitica, The," 153
"Arms and the Man," 58-65, 66, 96, 123, 252
Arnold, Matthew, 211
Art, liberty in, 153, 163
Asquith, Lord, in "Press Cuttings," 155
"Autocrat of the Breakfast Table, The," 134
Avenue Theatre, 58
Ayot St. Lawrence, 30

Bacon, Sir Francis, 150
Balsquith, in "Press Cuttings," 156
Balzac, 201
Bancroft, 283
Banger, Mrs., in "Press Cuttings," 154
Barbara in "Major Barbara," 121, 122, 123, 124, 125, 127, 128, 280
Barker, Granville, 160, 167, 168, 246
Barrie, J. M., 72, 103, 173, 263
Bentley (Bunny), in "Misalliance," 158, 159, 160
Bergson, 222, 230
Berkeley Lyceum, N. Y., 74, 82
Berlin, 58, 82, 89, 167, 176
Berliner Theater, 89
Bernstein, 253
Bijou Theatre, 89
Blanche, in "Widowers' Houses," 44, 45
Blanco, in "The Showing-up of Blanco Posnet," 149, 150, 151, 152, 219, 220, 223, 280
"Blanco Posnet, The Showing-up of," 147-153, 219, 252, 261, 277
Bleecker Hall, Albany, 89
Bluntschli, in "Arms and the Man," 59, 61, 63, 64
Bobby, in "Fanny's First Play," 165, 166
Brassbound, Captain, 102, 104, 105
Bret Harte, 148
Brieux, Eugène, 12, 56, 94

Britisher, Shaw's typical, 87, 118
Broadbent, in "John Bull's Other Island," 115, 116, 208
Browning, Robert, 229, 293, 294
Brussels, 67
Bunny (Bentley) in "Misalliance," 158, 159, 160
Bunyan, 151
Burgess, in "Candida," 72
Burgoyne, General, in "The Devil's Disciple," 94
Byron, 111

"Cæsar and Cleopatra," 84, 95-100, 227, 262
Cæsar, in "Cæsar and Cleopatra," 96, 97, 98, 99, 227, 231, 280, 281, 282
Campbell, Mrs. Patrick, 177, 182
Candida, 68, 69, 70, 72, 73, 75, 254, 260, 280, 289
"Candida," 9, 27, 31; analyzed, 66-74; 75, 76, 77, 80, 96, 123, 230, 231, 244, 245, 252, 268
"Captain Brassbound's Conversion," 77, 82; 100-105, 252, 256, 262
Carlyle, 5, 7, 31
Carpenter, Edward, 20
"Cashel Byron's Profession," 106
Catherine, in "Arms and the Man," 61
Catherine of Russia, in "Great Catherine," 183, 184
Celt, a generic term, 16
Censorship of plays, Shaw on, 6; 147, 187, 277
Charteris, in "The Philanderer," 47
"Cherry Orchard," 246
Chesterton, on Shaw, 151; 186
Chicago, 46
"Chocolate Soldier, The," 65
Christian Science, 136
Christians, 169, 170, 172
Church, The, 208
Civic and Dramatic Guild, The, 153
Clandon, in "You Never Can Tell," 78
Cleopatra, in "Cæsar and Cleopatra," 97, 99
Collins, in "Getting Married," 141, 143
Comedy Theatre, N. Y., 163
"Commentaries," Cæsar's, 282
Congreve, 42
"Connecticut Yankee at the Court of King Arthur," 185
Copyright Laws, English, 106
Corbett, James J., 106
Court Theatre, 46, 82, 114, 120, 129
Crampton, in "You Never Can Tell," 81
Crane, Stephen, 64
Craven, in "The Philanderer," 48
Criterion Theatre, 100, 163
Critics, Dramatic, 164, 240, 241, 259
Croydon, 82
Cuthbertson, in "The Philanderer," 48
"Cymbeline," 48

Daily Mail, London, 139
Daly, Arnold, 67
Daly's Theatre, N. Y., 106
"Damaged Goods," 12
Daniels, Elder, in "Blanco Posnet," 150, 220

Dante, 271
"Dark Lady of the Sonnets, The," 160-162, 262
Darwin, 19, 217, 292
Denshawai Horror, The, 118
Deutsches Theater, Berlin, 58, 129
"Devil's Disciple, The," 89-95; 96, 123, 139, 148, 151, 221, 248, 251, 254, 255
Dick, *see* Dudgeon
Dickens, 72, 85, 159, 182, 279
Divorce, Marriage and, 141-146
"Doctor's Dilemma, The," 46, 129-139, 232, 252, 255, 258, 262, 264
Don Juan, in "Man and Superman," 111, 223
Doolittle, in "Pygmalion," 182
Dora, in "Fanny's First Play," 165, 166
Doyle, 280
Drama, the modern, Shaw in, 271
Dresden, 66
Drinkwater, in "Capt. Brassbound's Conversion," 104, 280
Dubedat, in "The Doctor's Dilemma," 130, 232, 258, 280
Dublin, 8; Shaw's life in, 17-18, 263
Dudgeon, Dick, in "The Devil's Disciple," 90-94, 221, 251, 254, 280
Duke of York's Theatre, The, 173

Edison Telephone Company, 19
Edith, in "Getting Married," 142
Elder Daniels, *see* Daniels
Eliot, George, 1, 151, 207
Eliza, in "Pygmalion," 178 180, 181, 182
Elizabeth, Queen, 161, 162, 184
Elizabethan dramatists criticised, 107
Eiliot, Gertrude, 96
Emerson, 128, 218, 219, 229
Empire Theatre, N. Y., 82, 100
English art ideals, 99
English, *see* Britisher
Ervine, Mr., 187
Essie, in "The Devil's Disciple," 90
Eugenics, 72, 160, 193, 195, 198, 199, 235
Eugenists satirized, 73, 160
Evolution, Doctrine of, 216
Eynsford-Hills, Mrs., in "Pygmalion," 182

Fabian creed, 23, 190; policy, 194
Fabian Essays, 24
Fabian Society, founded, 22
Family life, 171, 200 *et seq.*
"Fanny's First Play," 31, 162-167, 177, 223, 243, 262, 268
Farrell, Mrs., in "Press Cuttings," 155, 156
Feemy, in "The Showing-up of Blanco Posnet," 150, 220
Ferrovius, 170
Fitch, Clyde, 286
Forbes-Robertson, Sir Johnston, 96
France, Shaw's vogue in, 3
Frank, in "Mrs. Warren's Profession," 50, 51, 53
Frankenstein, 181
Freddy, in "Pygmalion," 179, 182
French triangle, 254
Freud, 222

Galsworthy's "Justice," 54
Garden Theatre, N. Y., 77
Gardiner, in "Mrs. Warren's Profession," 51
Garrick Theatre, N. Y., 49, 114
Gaul, 228
George, Grace, 101, 120
George, Henry, influence upon Shaw, 20, 22, 192
George, Mrs., in "Getting Married," 141, 143, 146, 224-226, 286
Germany, Shaw's vogue in, 3
"Getting Married," 28, 46, 140-46, 195, 224, 244, 245, 261, 263, 268, 285
"Ghosts," 49
Gibney, Mrs., in "Fanny's First Play," 166
Giotto, 292
Giuseppi, in "The Man of Destiny," 88
Gloria, in "You Never Can Tell," 78, 81
Goethe, 291
Grace, in "The Philanderer," 47, 49
"Great Catherine," 84, 183-185, 243, 268
Greek drama, 264
Grein's Independent Theatre movement, 26

Haeckel, 217
Haffigan, in "John Bull's Other Island," 115, 116
Hale, Professor Edward Everett, 149
Hammersmith, 89
Hammon's book on Shaw, 3, 121
Handel, 292
Hapgood, Norman, 76
Haymarket Theatre, 141, 158, 160
"Healer, The," 135
Heine, 11
Helden, 58
Helmer, in "A Doll's House," 250
Henderson, Dr., Shavian biographer, 15, 50, 75, 77, 108, 230, 243
Her Majesty's Theatre, 176
Herald Square Theatre, N. Y., 58
Hero, The, satirized, 59-60, 202
Herrick's novel, 135
Higgins, in "Pygmalion," 178-182
Holmes, Dr. O. W., 134, 135
Home Rule, for Ireland, 117
Homer, 243, 271
Hotchkiss, in "Getting Married," 141
"How He Lied to Her Husband," 74-76, 82, 88, 262, 268
Hudson Theatre, N. Y., 108
Huxley, 19, 216
Hyde Park, 20, 32, 119
Hypatia, in "Misalliance," 158, 160

Ibsen, Shaw compared with, 32, 42, 50, 53, 56, 62, 149, 181, 190, 196, 250, 254, 259, 261, 265, 272-274, 279, 293
Imperial Theatre, 106
Independent Theatre, 39, 46, 49, 58, 66
India, 158
"Interlude at The Playhouse, The," 139-40
Ireland, Shaw ancestor in, 16, 187
Irish Literary Theatre, The, 114
Irish Players, The, 147, 150, 263
Irish question, in "John

Bull's Other Island," 115-116
"Irrational Knot, The," 24
Irving, Henry, 83

James, William, 57
Jesus, Doctrines of, 168, 169
Job, 292
"John Bull's Other Island," 114-120, 131, 208
Johnny, in "Misalliance," 158
Joyne, J. L., 20
Judith, in "The Devil's Disciple," 94
Julia, in "The Philanderer," 47
Juno, Mrs., in "Overruled," 175
"Justice," Galsworthy's, 54

Keegan, Father, in "John Bull's Other Island," 116-118, 208
Kennedy, 263
Kingsley, Charles, 73
Kingston, Gertrude, 101
Kingston Theatre, 114
Kingsway, The, 163
Kitchener, Lord, 155, 156
Knox, Mrs., in "Fanny's First Play," 166
Königliches Schauspielhaus, 66

Lady Cicely, in "Capt. Brassbound's Conversion," 102-105, 127, 252, 280
Lady Corinthia, in "Press Cuttings," 154
"Lady Windermere's Fan," 37
Lamarck, 217
Land Reform Union, 20
Larry, in "John Bull's Other Island," 115, 116
Lavinia, 170
Leo, in "Getting Married," 141
Lessing Theater, 176
"Letter to Father Damien," 118
Liberty, 171
Lickcheese, 42
"Little Eyolf," 62
Little Theatre, 163, 186
Lomax, in "Major Barbara," 122
London, Shaw's struggles in, 4, 17 *et seq.*; 49, 66, 67, 82, 89, 93, 134
London School Board, 29
London Stage Society, The, 76, 100, 106, 108
Lord Chamberlain, censorship of, 147
Lord Summerhays, in "Misalliance," 158
Louis, in "The Doctor's Dilemma," 131-133
Louka, in "Arms and the Man," 61, 64
Love, Shavian philosophy anent, 44, 158, 226-229, 287-288
Luther, Martin, 292

McCabe, Shavian biographer, 15, 16, 20, 23
McCarthy, Lillah, 165, 167
Macaroni Committee and Company, in "The Music Cure," 186
Mackaye's "Mater," 103
"Madras House," 246
"Magic," 186
"Major Barbara," 120-128, 131, 197
Mallock, W. H., 211
"Man and Superman," 9, 45, 108-114, 126, 156, 186, 252, 262, 288
Manchester, 154

"Man of Destiny, The," 74, 77, 82-89, 118, 262
Mansfield, Richard, 58, 67, 83, 89
Marchbanks, in "Candida," 68-72, 230, 289
Marconi scandal, 185
Margaret, in "Fanny's First Play," 165, 166, 167, 223
Mark Twain, 185
Marriage, 46; in "Getting Married," 141-146; in "Misalliance," 158; in "Overruled," 173-176; 245
Martyr type, 169, 172
Marx, 22, 192
"Mater," 103
"Maternity," 12, 94
Maude, Cyril, 76, 77, 83, 119, 139
Megaera, in "Androcles and the Lion," 171
Meredith, George, and interviewers, 31
Michael Angelo, 232
Middleton, 263
Milton, John, 153, 292
"Misalliance," 157-160, 196
Mitchener, in "Press Cuttings," 156
"Molière of the Twentieth Century, The," 3
Molière, the Don Juan of, 111; and the professions, 178; Shaw compared with, 279, 289, 293
Moody, American evangelist, 18
Morell, Rev. James, in "Candida," 72, 73, 230, 231
Morocco, 101
Morris, William, 31, 206
Mozart, 111, 261
"Music Cure, The," 185-187

Napoleon, as delineated by Shaw, 85, 86, 280, 281
Neues Theater, 82
New Amsterdam Theatre, N. Y., 95
Newcastle-upon-Tyne, 95
New England, in "The Devil's Disciple," 89
New Haven, 49
New Lyric Club, 49
New Woman, The, 78
New York City, Shaw plays in, 3, 46, 49, 66, 67, 101, 176
Nicola, in "Arms and the Man," 61
Nietzsche, 93, 125, 215, 217, 222, 293
Nora, in "A Doll's House," 197, 250
Nora, in "John Bull's Other Island," 115, 116

"Oedipus the King," 56
"O'Flaherty, V. C.," 8, 187
Olivier, Sidney, 20
Overman, Attaining, 216, 218, 233
"Overruled," 173-176

Palmer, John, 9
"Paradise Lost," 292
Park Theatre, 177
Parliament, and Shaw, 24
"Passion, Poison, and Petrifaction," 119, 184
Patiomkin, in "Great Catherine," 184
Patsy, in "John Bull's Other Island," 116
Payne-Townshend, Miss Charlotte Frances, Shaw marries, 29
Percival, in "Misalliance," 160
Petkoff, in "Arms and the Man," 61
"Philanderer, The," analyzed, 45-49, 58, 174

Philistines satirized, 164, 249
Pickering, in "Pygmalion," 182
Pinero, Sir Arthur, 54, 173
Plancus, 281
Plato, 206
Play, the one-act, Shaw a pioneer in, 263
Playhouse, The, of New York, 120; in London, 139
Playhouse, value and significance, 161
Play-writing, 162, 238; Greek method, 264
Positivist, Shaw a, 207; religion, 208
Praed, in "Mrs. Warren's Profession," 50, 54
"Preface for Politicians, A," 117, 118
"Press Cuttings," 153-157, 185, 262
Princess of Wales Theatre, The, 89
Princess Theatre, N. Y., 66, 263
Prossy, in "Candida," 68, 71, 72
Prostitution, 55
Public Opinion, Shaw's letter in, 18
Puritans, Shaw's plays for, 89-91
"Pygmalion," 176-183, 262

Rabelais, 11
Raina, in "Arms and the Man," 59, 60, 61, 63, 64
Ramsden, in "Man and Superman," 112
Rankin, in "Capt. Brassbound's Conversion," 104
"Red Badge of Courage, The," 64
Reginald, in "Getting Married," 141
Religion, in "Blanco Posnet," 150; in "Androcles and the Lion," 168; Shaw's, 205-209, 216-223
Rembrandt, 232
Revolution, The American, 89
Revolutionist, defined, 191
"Revolutionist's Handbook, The," 111, 190
Richte, 11
Ridgeon, Dr., in "The Doctor's Dilemma," 133
Romance, Shavian philosophy anent, 110
Roman civilization, 169, 170
Rome, 228
Royal Court Theatre, The, 153
Ruskin, 7, 31
Russia, Shaw's vogue in, 3

St. James Theatre, 168
Salt, Henry, 20, 29, 216
Salvation Army, in "Major Barbara," 121, 122, 124; in "Fanny's First Play," 165
Sankey, American evangelist, 18
Sarah, in "Major Barbara," 122
Saturday Review, 25
Saul of Tarsus, 151
Savoy Theatre, 95
Scandinavia, Shaw's vogue in, 3
"School for Scandal, The," 284
Schopenhauer, 222
Scribe, 253
"Second Mrs. Tanqueray, The," 54
Sergius, in "Arms and the Man," 59, 60, 61, 63, 64
Sex problems, 50, 51, 55, 68,

75, 88, 90, 174, 200-203, 286-288
Shakspere, compared with Shaw, 3, 27, 56, 72, 83, 90, 271, 272, 274, 279, 292; Shaw's criticism of, 125, 160, 161, 204
Shakspere National Memorial Theatre, 161
Shavion principle, 44; in "Misalliance," 158; in "Man and Superman," 223
Shelley, 29, 70, 267
"She Stoops to Conquer," 284
"Showing-up of Blanco Posnet, The," 147-153, 219, 252, 261, 277
Shylock, 72
Siberia, Monk of, 165
Silver, in "Treasure Island," 104
Soames, in "Getting Married," 141
Social teachings of Shaw, 189 *et seq.*
Socialism, Shaw and, 22, 153, 191 *et seq.*
Spain, 228
Spencer, 19, 217
Sphinx, The, 227-228
Spintho, 170
Stage Society, The, 147
Stein, Gertrude, 8
Stevenson, 104, 118, 151, 191, 267
Stockholm, 263
Straker, in "Man and Superman," 112
Strand Theatre, The, 77, 100
Strauss, Oscar, 65
Strindberg, 263
Sudermann, 263
Swedenborg, 225
Swinburne, 267

Tanner, John, in "Man and Superman," 78, 81, 109, 110, 112, 113, 186, 260, 280, 288
Tarleton, John, in "Misalliance," 158
Tchekov, 246
Technic of play-writing, 238
Tennyson, 267
Terry, Ellen, 82, 83, 100, 101
Teufelskerl, 89
Theatre Royal, 95
Théâtre Royal du Parc, 67
Theatre, the, Shavian definition of, 11; Shaw's deflection to, 25-28; his craftsmanship, 238
Thessaly, 228
Times, the London, 211
"Toddles," 140
Tolstoy, 163, 258, 291
Tommy, in "Androcles and the Lion," 171
Trebitsch, Siegfried, 167, 176
Tree, Sir Herbert, 83, 176
Trench, in "Widowers' Houses," 40, 41
Twain, Mark, 11

Undershaft, in "Major Barbara," 121, 123, 124, 125, 126
United States Commissioner of Immigration, on public ownership, 199
"Unsocial Socialist, The," 24

Vaccination, Shaw scorns, 136, 214, 217
Valentine, in "You Never Can Tell," 78, 80, 81
Vegetarianism, Shaw adopts, 20; in "The Doctor's Dilemma," 136; in "The Music Cure," 186, 216
Velasquez, 232
Victoria, Queen, 85
Vienna, 120

Violet, in "Man and Superman," 110, 113
Vivie, in "Mrs. Warren's Profession," 50, 51, 54, 257, 280, 288
Vivisection, Shaw satirizes, 46, 136

Wagner, 25, 240
Walkley, A. B., 98, 139, 164, 292
Wallace, 217
Wallack's Theatre, N. Y., 129, 168
Wallas, Graham, 29
War, satirized in "Arms and the Man," 59, 64; in "Cæsar and Cleopatra," 99, 100; in "Major Barbara," 121; in "Press Cuttings," 155
War, the European, Shaw's diatribe on, 8-10
Warren, Mrs., in "Mrs. Warren's Profession," 51, 52, 53, 54, 280, 288
"Warren's Profession, Mrs.," 9; analyzed, 49-57, 58, 109, 153, 186, 245, 252, 257, 268, 277
Washington, George, 282, 283
Washington Square Players, 263
Webb, Sidney, 20, 192
Wells, H. G., 9, 190
"What Every Woman Knows," 73, 103
"When We Dead Awaken," Ibsen's, 32, 181
Whistler, 8
Whitehall, 162
Whitman, Walt, 240
"Widowers' Houses," 26; analyzed, 39-45
"Wild Duck, The," 45
Wilde, Oscar, 37
William in "You Never Can Tell," 41, 78, 80, 155, 280
"Woman of No Importance, A," 37
Woman's social saga, 54
Woman suffrage, Shaw and, 146, 154, 156, 157, 196
Wordsworth, on woman, 127, 240
Wyndham, Sir Charles, on "Candida," 67

"You Made Me Love You," etc., 186
"You Never Can Tell," 41, 76-82, 91, 155, 260, 262, 267, 286

Zangwill, 263
Zeletical Society, Shaw joins, 19

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